CAVERNS OF TIME by CARLOS McCUNE

fantastic ADVENTURES

JULY
25¢

Living Girls from Cards –

CRAIG'S BOOK

By DON WILCOX

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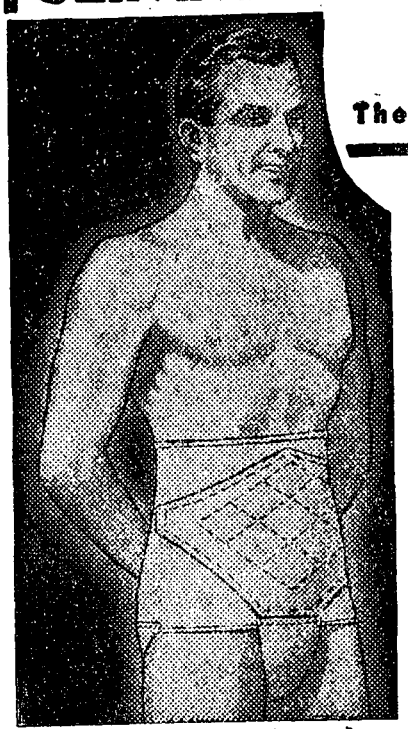

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Front cover painting by Robert Gibson Jones, illustrating a scene from "Craig's Book." Back cover painting by Malcolm Smith, depicting "Warriors of Other Worlds." Illustrations by Robert Fuqua; Frank R. Paul; Virgil Finlay; Malcolm Smith; Magarian; Julian; Rod Ruth

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JULY 1943

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VOLUME 5
NUMBER 7

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- **The False Courtesan,** by **BALZAC:** A virtuous woman is compelled to play the courtesan to her own husband!
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The Editor's Notebook

A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

YOU might call this issue of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES a "coming out" party. Because we give you three brand new authors, appearing for the first time in our pages, and in at least one instance for the first time!

FIRST timer is Carlos McCune (meet him on page 200 in "Introducing the Author") with a story using the three musketeers for characters. This is the story we promised you which would be a rival to William P. McGivern's musketeer story. The title of this one is "Caverns of Time," and we would like to know which author you think did best with his characters. McGivern is coming back at you soon with his own sequel, for the second round of the battle. Perhaps McCune will retaliate—unless the battle is over. It will be over when either of the contestants writes a bad story!

WALTON BLODGETT does a story reminiscent of the "dear dead days"; but he does it in a very entertaining manner. Here is a story that ought to bring the pangs of nostalgia to your memory, and at the same time, give you a swell thrill for its scientific adventure. It's "Other Worlds."

WARREN A. REED does a very short story called "Little Yowlie," which struck us as having a very human touch. It is seldom that writers string together just a few words and really manage to get something vital across.

LEROY YERXA surprised us with his "Nazi, Are You Resting Well?" And he amazed us too, because, believe it or not, about a week after this story appeared on our desk, the very thing featured in this story happened to a Nazi in Norway! Yes, and it was substantiated by authoritative stories in the press, and by special communiques of the Norwegian Underground! It is rumored that Nazis in Norway hesitate at answering the phone during the night!

ROBERT BLOCH comes back with another Lefty Feep story, this one laid in Rangoon. It's "The Goon from Rangoon," and we need say nothing more than that this is a typical Lefty Feep yarn—which means you'll be rolling in the aisles!

OUR novel this month is Don Wilcox's "Craig's Book," which we think is one of Don's finer efforts. It is extremely well written, and if the writing is any criterion, that serious novel Don has been writing about Kansas is going to be quite some novel!

CHESTER S. GEIER came apologetically into our office the other day with a manuscript he felt we couldn't use, but he thought it was the best he'd ever done, and felt we ought to at least read it just for our own personal opinion. Naturally, Chet walked out of our office with an accept—because it *was* the best story he'd written! "If You Believe" has that air of fantasy that is rare indeed, and we present it to you with great delight. Just to give you an idea of how well we thought of the story, we yanked out a story already set up to make room for it. So . . .

ACCORDING to a news report picked up from Japan, immediately after the execution of the American flyers who raided Tokyo, a man named Youshitomi Sukida was appointed to the post of inspector general of the metropolitan police board, part of the organization which tortured the flyers. This was an indirect result of a promotion of the man who ordered the executions! Well, here's one man who's stepped into a job he might not like when our flyers come back for revenge! This promotion is a direct invitation to us. Youshitomi; you *asked* for it!

DUE to artist Paul's new job down in Florida designing for the navy shipbuilding program, we've had to cut short his series of ancient gods. Malcolm Smith's "Warriors of Other Worlds" therefore makes its second appearance. We hope you like it.

PUT this down in your notebook: The name is "Julian" from now on, not "Julian S. Krupa." Julian wants to be known by that name for his art work, so your favorite interior artist is now simply Julian, and when you see that signature on a drawing, it'll be good—which is obvious every time you see one! Yessir, Julian's stuff doesn't need a signature!

AS FANTASTIC ADVENTURES readers, it seems in order for us to give you a tip about our sister magazine, this month. *Amazing Stories* carries sev-

(Concluded on page 8)

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FOOT ITCH
ATHLETE'S FOOT

PAY NOTHING TILL RELIEVED

Send Coupon

At least 50% of the adult population of the United ates are being attacked by the disease known as thlete's Foot.

Usually the disease starts between the toes. Little atery blisters form, and the skin cracks and peels. After while, the itching becomes intense, and you feel as ough you would like to scratch off all the skin.

BEWARE OF IT SPREADING

Often the disease travels all over the bottom of the et. The soles of your feet become red and swollen. The in also cracks and peels, and the itching becomes worse id worse.

Get relief from this disease as quickly as possible, be- use it is both contagious and infectious; it may go to our hands or even to the under arm or crotch of the legs.

WHY TAKE CHANCES?

The germ that causes the disease is known as Tinea Trichophyton. It buries itself deep in the tissues of the skin and is very hard to kill. A test made shows it takes 15 minutes of boiling to destroy the germ, whereas, upon contact, laboratory tests show that H. F. will kill the germ Tinea Trichophyton within 15 seconds.

H. F. was developed solely for the purpose of relieving Athlete's Foot. It is a liquid that penetrates and dries quickly. You just paint the affected parts. H. F. gently peels the skin, which enables it to get to parasites which exist under the outer cuticle.

ITCHING OFTEN RELIEVED QUICKLY

As soon as you apply H. F. you may find that the itching is relieved. You should paint the infected part with H. F. every night and morning until your feet are better. Usually this takes from three to ten days.

H. F. should leave the skin soft and smooth. You may marvel at the quick way it brings you relief. It costs you nothing to try, so if you are troubled with Athlete's Foot why wait a day longer?

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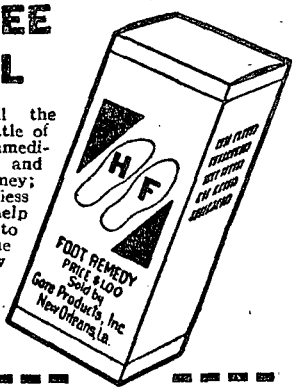
Sign and mail the coupon, and a bottle of H. F will be mailed you immediately. Don't send any money and don't pay the postman any money; don't pay anything any time unless H. F. is helping you. If it does help you, we know you will be glad to send us $1 for the bottle at the end of ten days. That's how much faith we have in H. F Read, sign and mail the coupon today.



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Please send me immediately a bottle of H. F. for foot trouble as described above. I agree to use it according to directions. If at the end of 10 days my feet are getting better I will send you $1. If I am not entirely satisfied, I will return the unused portion of the bottle to you within 15 days from the time I receive it.

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The Editor's Notebook

A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

(Concluded from page 6)

eral things you ought not to miss. One, a new type of imaginative story, an experiment on our part. It is a fantastic detective story, one of the kind that Arthur B. Reeve touched upon in his works, but never fully developed. It is "Carbon-Copy Killer," by Alexander Blade—of *course,* you remember that name! Another name you'll remember is Frank Patton, author of that super story, "Doorway to Hell," more than a year ago, which is still bringing in rave mail. He found time to shoot us a short called "Astral Assassin," which is a honey. Don't miss it. There are a few other things in *Amazing Stories* this month which lead us to believe you'd enjoy reading it!

DID you know that all samples of ocean water contain gold in them? To prove this statement all one need do is to boil a spoonful of ocean water till the last drop evaporates and a residue of salts remains. Any laboratory analyzing the contents of these salts will invariably report the presence of small traces of gold.

Why say small traces of gold? According to C. G. Fink, Columbia University, 5,000,000 lbs. of gold are dissolved in every cubic mile of ocean water. Yes, it is an established fact that we bathe in more gold than we have ever seen when we take a swim during a vacation at a seashore resort. The problem is—now that the gold exists in ocean water—how are we going to extract this fortune.

Up to now, the cost of recovering this gold is five times as great as the value of the gold extracted.

We may now ask the question as to why, with our modern perfected electroplating methods as efficient as they are, an extraction should be so costly? The answer to the question is that while gold precipitates out rapidly by the usual plating process, it does not adhere to the cathode in the crystalline form needed. It is thrown down in a collodial form, which is hard to recover because it drops away from the cathode before crystallizing. The only method of producing the deposit of the crystalline form desired is through the use of a spinning cathode. Here again we have a problem in that while spinning cathodes are theoretically sound, they as yet can not be developed to meet the practical requirements. In finding the solution to the electroplating of gold, we would also solve, with one stroke, a method of obtaining titanium and vanadium—two metals so important in the production of steel.

THERE are many men throughout the country who must labor in the heat of boiler rooms, in front of open-hearth furnaces, steel mills, and the like. Of course, it is impossible both from the standpoint of cost and the conditions necessary for production to install any air-conditioning system to cool the room and thus science has turned to the problem of air-conditioning the worker.

Several approaches have been made to the problem already, one of which involves a flexible hose that runs to the worker's coveralls from a cooling unit. When in operation, the cooler sends air at 80° F. and with one-half the relative humidity found in the shop through the worker's clothes. Workers report that although the room temperature even hits 100 degrees they don't perspire at all. In cases where workers remained at one spot for long periods of time, experiments were tried with placing nozzles that shot blasts of cool air near the workers. This plan was also successful.

SINCE it is difficult to obtain sufficient coal and oil because of the war the problem of keeping small homes warm enough for the winter is an important one. However, a modern adaptation of an ancient way to warm a small house efficiently and economically can be put to practical use.

By means of hot air ducts under the floors the ancient Romans made many of their baths and villas cozy and comfortable. Recently some schools and churches in England have been arranged for cold weather in a similar manner. The United States until lately has been hesitant in using the idea.

Prof. Raymond H. Wallace, of Connecticut State College, has tried the principle in a log cabin built from pines destroyed by the New England hurricane of four years ago and reports that it works fine. Contrary to what one would think the professor is a plant physiologist, not a heating engineer. His interest in the problem arose from a technical study of heat transfers which determine leaf temperatures.

The cottage was complete except for partition and floors when Prof. Wallace decided to experiment. The ground floor was graded as for a lawn. Upon this roofing felt was laid. About 700 feet of ordinary three-quarter inch black iron pipe and about 100 three-quarter inch malleable iron L's were assembled to form grids in the floor. Six inches of concrete were then poured over the pipes. Upstairs another grid was placed—roofing felt first, one-half inch of cement next, then the pipes and three inches of concrete last. The two sets of grids were hooked up with a circulation pump on a hot water boiler in a lean-to solarium. An automatic oil burner supplies the heat.

BEFORE we close our Notebook for this month, we've got only one more comment—isn't it fantastic how Rommel has overcome the force of gravity? Else how could he run so fast with those heavy tanks and guns? So long!

Rap.

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I Have Lived Before—

Says Aged Lama

CAN WE RECOLLECT OUR PAST LIVES?

IS THERE a strange familiarity about people you have met for the first time? Do scenes and places you have never visited haunt your memory? Are these proof that the personality—an immaterial substance—can survive all earthly changes *and return?* How many times have you seemed a *stranger to yourself*—possessed of moods and temperaments that were not your own?

Prejudices, fears, and superstitions have denied millions of men and women a fair and intelligent insight into these *yesterdays of their lives.* But in the enigmatic East, along the *waters of the once sacred* Nile, and in the heights of the Himalayas, man began a serious search beyond this veil of today. For centuries, behind monastery walls and in secret grottoes, certain men explored *the memory of the soul.* Liberating their consciousness from the physical world to which it is ordinarily bound, these investigators went on *mystical* journeys into celestial realms. They have expressed their experiences in simple teachings. They have disclosed whereby man can glean the true nature of self and find a *royal road* to peace of mind and resourceful living.

This Fascinating NEW Book Free

Today there is no greater—or more respected—perpetuator of these ancient teachings and startling truths than the Rosicrucians (not a religious organization). Let them send you a free copy of the book, *The Mastery of Life.* It explains how you may receive, for *fascinating study* in the privacy of your home, this useful knowledge which will enlarge your mental vision. By means of its simple principles, you can learn to remove doubts and fears and to establish self-confidence in these troubled times. It will reveal how to exercise the powers of self—which perhaps have *remained a mystery to you. Write today.* Use the convenient coupon below. Don't delay!

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CRAIG'S BOOK

By DON WILCOX

SIX dazzlingly beautiful girls on a single float—what a parade!

To be fair about it, several floats besides Hamilton Craig's were worth a second look; the military bands were good for a thrill any day; and the passing displays of streamlined architecture topped anything the crowds had ever seen.

But parades are a pretty girl's excuse for being, no doubt, or vice versa. And this architect's passing show was no exception.

"What do youse kids do the rest of the week?" some bumpkin shouted from the sidewalk.

"Howzabout a date?" his friend joined in.

Other lads gave surprised whistles, middle-aged business men took in the animated scenery with approving eyes, and here and there a tottering old grandpa would suddenly shake off ten years of age as the girls threw kisses at him.

Twenty blocks of continuous waving and smiling. Then the parade was over—all but the awarding of prizes. The contest judge beamed at Hamilton Craig's perfect sextette. Their triumph was complete. They had won.

When the shouting was over and the

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What was the secret of this tiny book with its mysterious white cards? Why were they so extremely valuable?

crowds were dissolving, the judge mounted the prize float to engage the six lovely young things in a private conversation—in behalf of Craig.

"Hamilton Craig asked me to divide the prize money among you, one-sixth to each."

"But we've no right to take all the money," the girl with the snappy brown eyes protested.

"S-s-s-sh!" another girl broke in. "The judge knows what he's doing."

The contest judge acknowledged the compliment. "The prize money is nothing to Mr. Craig. Gather 'round, fair ones. One, two, three, four, five. Where's number six? Oh, there you are, buying an ice-cream bar. Come, young lady."

"Speakin' to me, Mistah?" Number Six asked in a soft Southern drawl. "Ah'm comin'."

The first girl, Hetty by name, was still in doubt. "Some of this money should be used to pay for the float. If we could see Mr. Craig—"

"You're not to see him," said the contest judge. "He was emphatic on that point. If you don't know Hamilton Craig—well!"

Here the contest judge stepped out of his official role long enough to throw

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a few sidelights upon Craig the Bachelor. Between Craig's wealth and his good looks he had been kept busy warding off aggressive females. He had been known to change his address more than once to throw followers off the trail.

"They say he turns his house into a chamber of horrors to scare away ambitious socialites," the contest judge declared. "But getting back to the point, Mr. Craig does not want to see you. Only at the last minute did someone persuade him to enter a float in the parade. I'll wager that none of you six ever met him before he chose you for this job."

Hetty glanced at her companions. "Yes, all six of us are strangers to Mr. Craig, and to each other. He just picked us up to serve in this parade."

"But we are going to stick together long enough to land a contract," said one girl who had been very eager for the prize money.

The other five girls turned to her in surprise. What was this talk about a contract?

"If you can land any kind of contract from Craig," said the contest judge, handing out the prizes, "I'm for you. Already you've got the photographers and news tattlers thinking you've been in vaudeville together somewhere. Craig could put you on Broadway if he took a notion. But for an architect he's one mysterious guy, and I figure women are his blind spot."

"We'll open his eyes," said one of the girls.

Ten minutes later the six of them were on their way to Hamilton Craig's mansion.

CORNELIA, the promoter of the contract scheme, was already talking in terms of big money. This event had been a break for her, judging from her eagerness. Hetty, carrying a small camera, snapped a close-up of her expression, thinking to entitle it, "Look out, Mr. Craig."

The celebrated bachelor architect had a number of addresses. One of his hobbies was to acquire old houses and make them over. After some trial and error, the girls arrived at an old mansion on Southwest Boulevard.

"Mah heavens! What a place!" the Southern girl exclaimed. "Ah've nevah seen a bigger haouse in Chawleston."

"And to think he has all this house to himself," another girl said. "It's a shame."

Cornelia, the contract promoter, gave out with some last minute instructions. "Remember, girls, he's shy of women. He'll probably try to close the door in our faces. We've got to take him by storm. Leave the talking to me. I'll give him a line about all the circuits we've played."

"I don't like lying to him," Hetty protested.

Genevieve, sophisticated beauty, edged in front of Cornelia haughtily as they came to the entrance.

"Oh, you want to ring the doorbell?" There was jealousy in Cornelia's tone. "You think Mr. Craig prefers platinums?"

Genevieve's answer was a cold shoulder. She rang the doorbell.

No answer.

The Southern girl, who had perched herself in the window ledge, was sure someone was inside.

"All right," said Cornelia, "we'll try once more. If they don't answer, we'll barge in."

"Please. We mustn't break moral laws." This came from a girl who had had little to say heretofore. There was deep moral conviction in her tone. "Only by righteousness can we win."

"Righteousness?" said Cornelia. "We'll talk about that later. The con-

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tract's the important thing."

Still no answer from the doorbell.

"Come on, girls," said Cornelia. But it was Genevieve who cut in ahead of her to open the door.

"Don't forget the moral laws," said the quiet one with the sensitive conscience.

"And don't forget Craig's chamber of horrors," Hetty added. She had her camera ready as they entered. If there were any trapdoors or dancing skeletons, she meant to snap them.

The girls found themselves within a large oaken hallway. Clusters of little round blue lights glowed like dominoes from the paneled walls. At the farthest corner of the room was a desk with a table-lamp, where the Southern girl thought she had seen someone a minute before.

The bare walls gave back weird echoes. And the girls were chilled by the resounding of their own footsteps. They drew back into a huddle.

Cornelia suggested that someone should explore the crooked corridor beyond the desk. No one volunteered.

"But there's his room!" Hetty suddenly exclaimed. "Stay back till I get a picture of it."

THE entrance off the hallway was a half-open door in the shape of a Gothic arch. Bright new copper letters formed the words:

HAMILTON CRAIG
Private Office
DO NOT ENTER

Not much could be seen through the opening other than the pink wall beyond, brightened by late afternoon sunshine.

"Mr. Craig! . . . Mr. Craig!" Cornelia called. Her voice faded to a whisper. "I don't think he's there. This place sounds awful empty."

"Oh, Mr. Craig!" Genevieve sang out in a saccharine tune. "Oh, Mr. Cra-a-a-aig! We've come to see you!"

There must have been electric eyes in the wall. As Genevieve walked toward the door it softly swung closed.

Both Cornelia and Genevieve fell back, but the red-haired girl, named Patsy, marched ahead angrily.

"Nobody's ging to slam a door in my face!" Patsy tossed her head. She was in a fighting mood. She flung the door wide open.

On the instant, a thousand bars of light stabbed in from all sides of the Gothic arch. A thousand electric sparklers seemed to be going off at once. The rattle and hum were terrifying at first, and the light was blinding.

Then Patsy called back, "Come on, girls. I think he's back this way."

The straight bright bars of light continued to vibrate through the doorway, but there was still an opening in the center where Patsy had disappeared. Patsy was still calling, now from a distance. There was no terror in her voice. "Come on, we'll show him he can't scare us."

"It's just a trick," said Genevieve haughtily, and she walked through the opening within the fan of electric bars.

Cornelia followed her. Both girls disappeared.

"Wheah did they all go?" the Southern girl asked, starting forward.

"Better wait," Hetty advised, "until we see what this is all about."

"Ah nevah befo' saw a thunderstorm in a haouse."

"We have no business in the house," Hetty declared.

"We departed from the path of righteousness," said Grace, the girl with the moralistic outlook. "This thunderstorm is a warning."

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"I think it is a practical joke," said Hetty, "but if they don't hurry back we had better take a chance and follow them."

The voices of the others faded in the distance. If they were still talking, the snap of electric sparks drowned them out.

As the minutes passed, Hetty and her two companions grew too curious to wait any longer. They approached the electrified opening.

"Did you see which way they went?" Hetty asked.

"As fah as mah eyes could tell," said the Southern girl, "they turned into nothing."

"They must have gone to the right," Hetty decided. "Well, here goes."

The trio filed through the electrically charged opening and, like the others, "turned into nothing."

Or, as a certain observer of the transformation afterward declared, "almost nothing."

CHAPTER II

Archie Swings Round the Block

THE single observer who took in the scene of transformation at the Gothic doorway was Archie Burnette, a young man of twenty-six who needed a job.

Archie Burnette was in Craig's private office on business, but no one knew he was there. He had come two hours before, with the purpose of fulfilling an assignment for the Overton Employment Agency. If he made good, he had been told, he might land a job with Hamilton Craig himself.

The instructions from Overton's had been brief. Archie guessed that the agent himself was mystified over the nature of this errand.

"You are to go out to Hamilton Craig's new house," the agent had said. Mr. Craig wants some more information before he moves in. The address is 7599 Southwest Boulevard. You will find a series of buildings. There used to be an old hospital in that block. The mansion that fronts on the street was the doctor's home. You're to count the rooms."

"In the mansion or the hospital?" Archie had asked.

"All the rooms. The three or four buildings on the block are all connected. Some of them are still occupied, I think. But you must walk right in and survey the whole block and list the number of rooms on every level."

And so Archie Burnette had missed the parade. He had taken a car to the suburb on the outer limits of Southwest Boulevard. He had circled the block two or three times before nerving himself to walk in at one of the brick-walled Gothic entrances.

With pencil and notebook he had followed through one room after another. Along the west side a wing of the old hospital had been converted into an apartment hotel. Off the small lobby there was a cafe a few steps below the street level. The tables were empty. At the bar three or four men were dozing over their drinks.

The attendant at the bar gave Archie the approximate floor plan, informing him which of the rooms were occupied.

"Business is bad," the bartender said. "Nobody wants to live in an old broken-down building. Look at those walls. The south wing is worse. It's vacant except for the laboratories on the second and third."

"What kind of laboratories?"

"Search me. I've never paid any attention, but I see Dr. Silverhead go by every day or two. He's one of these long-haired professors that you read about. I suppose he's happy."

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Archie felt uneasy over the bartender's disclosures. It seemed that most of the tenants of these buildings were in arrears on their rent, and every reference to Dr. Silverhead heightened Archie's suspicions.

"He never pays nothin'," the bartender said, "but he's in that side of the hospital that nobody could use anyhow. When the roof falls in on him, maybe somebody will rebuild on this spot. That's why I'm holding on here. It's a damn good location."

"I'd better get over and see the doctor," said Archie.

The doors were locked, and no one would answer his knock. He passed along the windows and got what he could of the laboratory interior. The largest room on the ground floor of the south side had been an auditorium. The seats were piled up with lumber and rolls of canvas, and unopened crates of glistening scientific apparatus.

From what Archie could see of the stage, it, too, was a strange mixture of battered scenery and bright metal paraphernalia that Archie could not readily classify.

Beyond the south wing of the old hospital Archie found his way through a passage into a courtyard. Someone had tended a garden here. In recent weeks the lawn had been mowed and apparently a new fence had been built around an old well in the center of the court. However, much of the rambling shrubbery had been neglected. He walked along the graveled paths, almost hidden from the surrounding arcades.

He found his way into the old mansion through a window. He walked softly now. Voices were echoing through the corridors that joined the laboratories.

ARCHIE preferred to avoid company. He carried a statement from the employment agency and could explain his presence if necessary. But the bartender had given him a suspicion toward the scientist who occupied these premises.

The voices soon were out of hearing. Each new room he entered greeted him with a glow of electric lights. Obviously, some recent electric wiring had been done in this place. Electric eyes were turning on these lights whenever he crossed a threshold.

Now he entered a corner chamber where the light of the afternoon sun brightened the pink walls. The door ahead was half opened. He could see a sign on it— "Hamilton Craig—Private Office—Do Not Enter."

Here for the first time he had discovered something familiar. But the room itself showed no signs of being occupied by Craig. Dusty linen covers were over the furniture. The floor had not been swept. The only foot tracks in the dust were those near the door. Obviously, these copper letters had been nailed on within the last day or two.

But there was something more that caught Archie's curiosity. The Gothic arch of the doorway itself was studded with a row of tiny copper points, like a string of sharp-pointed beads. A well insulated wire was attached to the lower end of this border of points.

Archie frowned and backed away. The automatic lighting of rooms had put him on his guard.

He was debating how to get out of Craig's private office without crossing that threshold when he heard the chatter of female voices in the room beyond.

Archie ducked back into an alcove. He listened. From the hallway of soft blue lights these girls were daring each other to enter this private office.

"Ye gods!" Archie thought. "If they come in here looking for Craig and find

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me—" Archie's thoughts turned a series of flipflops. It would be funny, he thought, to pose as Craig. If he only had a little more nerve—but things like that only happened in plays. He edged back into the next room and vowed he would not emerge no matter what happened.

Then before his eyes the strangest, most unbelievable things occurred.

First of all, the door went closed.

Next, someone flung it open, and he saw a beautiful red-haired girl come through. Instantly there was a shower of electrical sparks from the sides of the doorway. To Archie it was like a thousand tracer bullets shooting straight at the girl.

But she came on and turned to call to the others. She was still calling *when she vanished in thin air.*

A second and a third girl followed. The brilliant shower of electrical sparks threatened them as they passed through the doorway. And yet Archie thought that they were not touched, for after they were safely within the room he could see an open space in the center of the door framed by the cracking little bolts of lightning.

The light was blinding, and Archie was reluctant to trust his eyes; but what he seemed to see now was a little white card fluttering in the air. It drifted across a table and dropped down upon the dusty linen cover.

Within the next two or three minutes a total of six different girls had entered the room through the barrage of electrical vibrations, and all of them, if Archie could believe his eyes, had turned invisible.

Six girls disappeared—six white cards materialized out of thin air and fluttered down to the table.

Everything was perfectly silent except for the beating of Archie's heart. He could not catch his breath. In fact, he was under a nightmare paralysis. The electrical spray was still humming and snapping dangerously, and he had momentary visions of being extinguished by it.

Suddenly there were footsteps from the room beyond. The fan of electrical bars snapped off. A tall, straight man walked in briskly—*Craig himself.*

Before Archie could break out of his frozen state, Hamilton Craig picked up the six white cards, fitted them into a little leather-backed book, pocketed it and strode out.

CHAPTER III

Archie Becomes a Bookkeeper

HEEDLESS of the dangerous door, Archie ran after the disappearing figure of Craig. He raced across the blue-lighted hallway, and followed through a luxurious dining room beyond. There he stopped, confused as to which of several doors Craig had taken.

The pursuit was a hopeless one. With a quickening sense of responsibility he added these rooms to his notebook charts. He would reconstruct the rest by guess. It was high time to get back to the Overton Employment office, by taxi.

The agent at Overton's greeted Archie with a not too friendly, "Well, it's about time. Five minutes more and we would have been closed. Go back to Booth 7. Craig is waiting."

"Craig?" Archie gulped.

A moment later Archie was shaking hands with Hamilton Craig himself, and the slender, stern-looking business man was scrutinizing him with sharp black eyes.

"You sure do get around, Mr. Craig," Archie mumbled.

"Sit down, Mr. Burnette, we haven't

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much time to talk."

Archie was skeptical. What sort of man was this? Was he not carrying six "magic cards" in his pocket? The weird events of the past hour were shooting through Archie's brain like skyrockets. How could this handsome, black-mustached man sit there so coolly, fingering his check book with such a steady hand?

Archie presented his sketchy notebook report of the rooms and buildings he had surveyed. He apologized for the lack of accuracy.

"I didn't go through the whole house on the east. I was sort of confused. After what happened—"

"Don't mention it," said Craig. "You made a good beginning. I can use you. I have looked over your employment record. You seem to be resourceful. I think you have about the right amount of nerve. It wouldn't do to be too foolhardy."

This was a dubious compliment, Archie thought. Also, it implied something ominous regarding the job.

Craig made out a check and passed it over. "Here's an advance. You start at once. If you stick, the salary will be fifty a week."

"I'll be ready to go to work tomorrow."

"You start this evening. I want you to go back to the Southwest Boulevard mansion and pick up a book."

Archie frowned. He tapped the folded check on the table. "Pardon me, Mr. Craig, but just what sort of work is this?"

"You applied for a bookkeeper's position, didn't you? Well, that's it. You are to be my bookkeeper. I will dignify you with the title of my personal secretary, sergeant-at-arms and night watchman. How's that?"

"It sure sounds like a steady job. When will I ever have time for dates with my girl friends?"

"You have girl friends?" Craig was very serious.

"If I don't have now, I will have as soon as I start earning."

Craig gave a satisfied smile. "That's fine. I've picked the right man, I'm sure. You will have a date every night."

Archie rose, feeling that he ought to be indignant. In the movies he had seen, men like himself would have torn up the check and said, "What do you think I am—a gigolo?"

IN THE moment of indecision Craig came to the rescue. "You are right. Money isn't everything. Your personal honor is involved. We'll make the salary seventy-five."

"Thank you," said Archie weakly. He accepted the new check.

"Now listen carefully," said Craig. "My lawyer has warned me that I have thirty days in which to get married. Either that, or lose a small empire of apartment buildings. An inheritance clause, you understand. My uncle Jimpson had tricky notions."

"Thirty days to get married in!" Archie regarded the celebrated bachelor with awe. "Gosh! Who's the lucky lady?"

"I haven't the slightest idea. I have been too busy to get acquainted with any women. In fact, I have had to take severe measures to protect myself—or, let's be frank about it, girls make me nervous."

"Well, of course, too many girls—" Archie was trying to be sympathetic.

"You see," Craig continued, "a man of wealth like myself can never be sure that girls aren't deceiving him. But I have hit upon an ideal scheme for getting acquainted. I have just acquired six prospective wives."

"Six!" Archie gulped. Wasn't that the number of girls that had come

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through the electrified door?

"Six—and what a bunch! Regular *cards* from what I have seen of them." Craig gave a little contented laugh. "But the way I am arranging things I will be able to keep my distance. You will help me discover which is the—shall I say, least objectionable one. So for the present you are to make no other dates."

"Well, I will take their addresses," said Archie dubiously.

"That won't be necessary. Your bookkeeping procedure will make it very easy for you to keep tab on them. Their headquarters will be my own mansion on Southwest Boulevard."

Archie gave a low whistle. The thought of six rival girls staying together in the same house sounded like trouble aplenty.

Craig rose. "That's all. You are to begin by going back to the mansion at once. I want you to pick up a book for me. You will find it in the desk in the corner of the oak paneled reception room. Here's a key.

"It's a little brown leather-backed book. Be sure the book is snapped shut. I don't want you to lose anything out of it. You see it contains six cards—"

"Yes, I know."

"Oh, you know!" Craig's penetrating eyes were searching Archie curiously. "Well, then, you know something about your bookkeeping job, all right, don't you?"

Archie stammered, "I—er—I was in the next room when you came into your private office and gathered up the cards."

"All right," Craig smiled mysteriously. "Take the book home with you. Report to me at my downtown office tomorrow at nine. If time weighs on your hands between now and then, get out the cards and play a game of solitaire."

CHAPTER IV

Archie Picks Up a Card

THE doctors' mansion and hospital buildings had been dreary and forbidding in the daytime; by darkness they presented a weird and fearsome aspect. Archie circled the block slowly.

He chided himself. There was nothing to be afraid of. He had only to enter the east mansion door, pick up the book and leave. What difference should it make that the doctor in the south wing had drawn all the blinds or that mysterious men were drifting along these sidewalks?

Archie sauntered up the steps. The dank smell of aging brick walls greeted him as he opened the door. The little dominoes of blue lights were glowing. His footfalls echoed through the hall rooms. He wasted not a step.

The desk drawer was locked, all right. He turned the key, opened the drawer. Yes, the little brown book was there. If Archie was surprised, it was because he remembered the haste with which Craig must have crossed this room a few hours earlier.

Archie recalled the details distinctly. He had not seen Craig pass through this room, but he had seen that mysterious gentleman thrust the book into his pocket and make his exit from his private office into this room. And by the time Archie had gathered up presence of mind to follow him, Hamilton Craig's footsteps had clattered on into the big dining room and beyond.

Archie could hardly believe that Craig had had time to stop and deposit the book and lock the drawer in passing. Much less had he had time to make a return trip before his appearance at the employment office.

"The guy must be a screwball," Archie thought, but that didn't help

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much. Here was the book, and his orders were to take it.

He opened it and counted the white cards. Six of them. He held them up to the light, one after another.

"Well, I'll be damned! They are nothing but plain white paper cards."

He packed five of them back into the leather folder. He bent down to pick up the one that had dropped to the floor. It slid along the floor just out of his grasp.

He glanced about. If there was a draft of air, he could not detect it. But now the card was floating upward. The sight sent chills tingling to his fingertips. He had better get it back into the book and get out of here.

He made a grab for it, but it was *gone*.

Then it happened. Before his eyes there appeared some filmy ectoplasm. Archie could not call it anything else because he did not believe in ghosts. The shadowy substance immediately filled out into something very tangible, not to mention beautiful.

"Well, hello," said Archie, more than a little flabbergasted. "You're one of Craig's girls—"

"I beg your pardon!" The girl who had materialized before Archie's eyes was a shapely brunette, garbed in the colorful Chinese costume she had worn in the architect's parade float. There was a little anger in her snappy brown eyes. But Archie thought she was more bewildered than angry.

As for himself, Archie was a bit bowled over. "Gosh! Can Craig pick 'em!"

"Oh, Craig—that's where I am. I had forgotten. Well, thank goodness I am out of that party. Which way do I—"

She turned and started for the door.

"Wait. Don't hurry off. You must meet Craig."

The girl hesitated. A chance to meet Hamilton Craig was something no girl could ignore.

"I ought to get home. I am a working girl, you know, and after all, I don't even know who you are."

"Allow me to present Archie Burnette, Mr. Craig's secretary."

ARCHIE made a grandiose gesture. To him this situation was something right out of the movies. He could not let this girl get away without finding out where she came from. And besides, he had his obligations to Craig.

"All right, I'm Hetty Hildreth," the girl said, "and you may tell Mr. Craig I paid my respects."

"Wait. Where do you work?"

"At the big photographers' supply house on Twelfth and Main. I'm their top saleslady, if I do say so myself. You see I always carry a camera. There!"

Before Archie could say whether he liked it or not, she had taken a flashlight picture of him. But Archie liked it. He liked everything about this girl. However, he could think of only one good reason for detaining her.

"I will call Mr. Craig at once if you will just wait."

The girl agreed, reluctantly. She could not imagine where the time had gone. She seemed to have been asleep, she said. The last thing she remembered was entering Craig's private office with several of the girls, and she felt terrible over having intruded.

While Hetty Hildreth waited, Archie retreated into the dining room and looked around for a telephone. He might have had better luck in Craig's private office, but he did not want to chance that doorway. What he needed most of all was a minute to collect his thoughts.

"I don't dare let her get away," he

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said to himself. "She's one of Craig's six cards. I wish to gosh I could put her back in the pack."

There was no telephone in the dining room nor in any of the three rooms adjoining it. Archie kept mumbling to himself. What would Craig want him to do? There ought to be a book of instructions with this job.

"Who's that?" Archie stepped out into the corridor. Three men were coming down the passage from another building. The tall man in the center was none other than Craig himself. His lips twisted beneath his black mustache. He was puffing hell out of a cigarette. There was no friendly light in his eyes for Archie.

"Wait a minute, fellows," he muttered. Then to Archie, "What's going on here?"

"Mr. Craig, I—you never told me you would be down here, too."

"Didn't I? That's too bad. What are you doing here?"

"I got the book, like you told me."

"Oh, I see," said Craig, looking back at his companions who were waiting impatiently. "Well, you had better get out. It's time this place was closed up for the night."

"But one of the girls is here—I mean —it happened when one of the cards fell out. I think you ought to meet her."

"No time now. Besides, I met her when I made up the float. Come along; we are closing up."

Craig and his two companions hurried on, and the last Archie heard was a final echo of the same advice.

THIS conversation had taken him into the oak-paneled reception room, where Hetty Hildreth had made herself as obscure as possible. He turned to her apologetically. He guessed there was no time for sociability this evening.

"I should think not," Hetty gasped. "They flew through like an express train. I was tempted to take their pictures, but—"

"Not afraid of my boss, are you?"

"No, but those other two fellows—they looked like gangsters."

Archie laughed. "I guess Craig can take care of himself. Look—this is funny. There's no way to lock this door. I'll tell Craig about that the first thing tomorrow."

They started down the steps, and Archie searched the street for a taxi. Somehow he knew it was wrong, but he could not think of any way out. He would take this girl home.

But before a taxi came along he found another pretext for delay. A well dressed, heavy-jowled man had just passed, and Archie retained an image of a brutal face, a monocle and a white bow tie. But now he was aware that that man was ascending the steps to the mansion.

"Now who could that be?"

"Didn't you say you were Craig's secretary?" Hetty asked. She seemed to be teasing him. "I would think you'd know the house guests."

"I am just starting," said Archie. "Seems as if Craig keeps open house. If you don't mind, I'll park you at this corner drugstore while I go back and investigate."

"I won't be parked," said Hetty, "but I'll go back with you. From the looks of things it must be a town meeting."

Archie saw that she was referring to another man who had just crossed to the yard from a parked car. He, too, was ascending the steps of the huge brick house.

"Of course, if you would rather put me in a taxi and send me home alone, it is quite all right."

"Gosh! I'd rather have you come along," Archie said, and wondering if

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he was revealing cowardice on his part, he added, "I mean you're being a mighty good sport to go adventuring with me this time of night."

"You don't know me," said Hetty. "I'm always on the lookout for good camera subjects. That bulldog with the white tie and the monocle—can't you imagine me, coming into the store with his picture?"

"You're sure you're not afraid? This place is a haunted house, if I ever saw one."

"I shouldn't be afraid as long as I'm with you. If you're Craig's secretary, it's your business to know what's going on."

At the top of the steps Archie glanced back to make sure no one else was coming. Only two cars were parked between the street lights. Probably this was the lonesomest block in all the city.

Hetty walked in silently. Archie followed, and he was careful to close the door noiselessly.

CHAPTER V

Three Camera Subjects

IN THE reception room of the mansion the blue lights burned continuously. For a few rooms beyond the lights had gone on, one after another, as each of the men had crossed into the hospital building.

Archie had no intention of actually eavesdropping when he and Hetty set out to follow this series of lights. If he had considered it essential to keep his presence a secret, he would have searched for some master switch to cut off all these electric eyes that flashed lights on automatically.

But as he and Hetty came within earshot of the conference between the two men, they decided it would be wise not to intrude. These voices were discussing a matter which was evidently outside the letter of the law.

"My Gosh! They sound like a crime ring!" Archie whispered, as Hetty grabbed his arm nervously.

"We had better get out," the girl whispered. "It is some kind of a business secret."

But she clung to Archie's arm and they continued to listen. Gradually they edged closer. Since entering the hospital building they had been in almost total darkness. Luckily the system of automatic lighting had been left behind. But it was odd, Archie thought, that these two men dared to meet in a lighted room and discuss their affairs in unguarded tones.

Presently Archie and Hetty found their way into a dark room in which furniture had been stored. Perhaps it had been a kitchen at one time, for there was a service window. A thin line of light filtered in from the adjoining conference room.

"There's our man with the monocle," Hetty whispered.

Archie tapped her hand as if warning her not to breathe. Together they peered through the narrow opening beneath the window, resting their arms in the deep dust on the ledge.

The conference room was lighted by a single desk lamp. The man in the swivel chair appeared to be waiting while his client read some papers.

The client, if such he was, was an elderly gentleman with an ivory-tinted walrus mustache, the ends of which trembled, betraying his nervousness as he peered at the paper.

"What a show!" Hetty whispered breathlessly. "What I wouldn't give for a movie camera!"

Archie knew she was scared, though. He was putting on the bravery act, holding her hand to keep her from trembling. And yet he tended to shudder

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whenever he looked at the thick, brutal face of the man in the swivel chair.

With puffy fingers this thick-set person tapped his monocle on the desk top. He tossed his head back and forth. His right eyebrow went up and his left one clamped down tighter as he eyed his prospect.

"If there's anything you don't understand," said the thick-set man, adjusting his monocle, "Dr. Silverhead will be here in a few minutes."

He consulted his watch. He drew an orchid-colored cigarette holder from his pocket and lighted a cigarette. His client was a slow reader.

"I had better call Dr. Silverhead to be sure," the thick-set man continued. "He's very absent-minded. He may have forgotten."

There was no answer to the telephone call. The client looked up.

"Didn't you get him, Mr. Drake?"

"He must be on his way up. Is there any question about that contract, Mr. Rickenthorp?"

"I—I think not."

THE man with the walrus mustache seemed unsure of himself. "You are sure that everything will be all right, Mr. Drake?"

"Now, Mr. Rickenthorp, don't be foolish," said the thick-set man, puffing confidently. "You have been contacted in three previous interviews. You have been assured that many big men are investing in this experiment. You were advised not to come for the fourth interview unless you were ready to lay the money on the line."

"I am ready," said Mr. Rickenthorp, weakly. "If this works out, it will pay bigger than anything I have ever tried."

"It will work out, Mr. Rickenthorp. It may take time and, as you understand, some human sacrifice will be involved."

The fragile old gentleman managed a laugh. "I guess we can stand that." He counted out a number of bills.

Drake handed his client a fountain pen. "Before I touch the money, you must sign, and have I called your attention to this particular clause?"

"I have it practically memorized," said Rickenthorp. He read it over aloud: " 'My complete endorsement of this plan is denoted, first, by my investment, and secondly, by my fullest approval of whatever measures the experimenter sees fit to take, even though the sacrifice of human lives may be necessitated.' "

With trembling hand the old gentleman signed.

Footsteps could be heard from down the corridor. Drake looked up sharply. As soon as the hall lights came on he seemed to be satisfied.

"It's Dr. Silverhead. He didn't forget, after all."

From their hiding-place Archie and Hetty could see the white-haired newcomer as he tottered into the conference room. So this was Dr. Silverhead. A wizened old man, with crisp white mustaches and goatee, and watery eyes that seemed to be seeing visions.

The doctor was absent-minded indeed. He evidently knew he had come to meet a client. It was Drake that he approached with his greeting, until the former apprised him of his mistake.

"It is Mr. Rickenthorp you have come to meet," Drake said. "Mr. Rickenthorp has just signed our agreement."

The doctor shook hands with the walrus-mustached man, but did not bother to look at him. The ceiling seemed to be more attractive to the doctor, who kept up an incessant mumbling about his own troubles.

"I have been calling everywhere to try to get some lenses. No place is open this time of day. It is an outrage.

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If I were making lenses I would try to give service to the most important people. There ought to be more lens-makers. I broke the one good lens I had. Yes, I may be driven to do it myself. I have made other professional equipment. Is there any reason why I could not make lenses?"

"Of course you could make them," said Drake, "but now I want you to say a word to Mr. Rickenthorp. He is ready for the experiment."

The doctor was profoundly affected by this announcement. He paced back and forth in front of the client, patted him on the shoulder and shook him by the wrist.

"So you are going to help us out. That's fine—fine. I admire your courage, your spirit of sacrifice."

"What is this?" The walrus-mustached man was nonplussed. "Oh, you mean I get to watch you perform something."

"Precisely," said the doctor jubilantly, "you will see it from the inside. You are going to be the experiment yourself."

"Oh, no, not me! I came here as an investor."

Drake looked down his cigarette holder, fixed his monocle and drew a revolver out of his pocket. He spoke brusquely.

"Don't start backing out. You have just signed this document. That proves you are willing to spend lives in this cause. All right, the next life on the program happens to be yours."

CHAPTER VI

Trail of Shadows

BECAUSE of Hetty, Archie had made a show of bravery in plunging blindly into this eavesdropping situation. Hetty had believed in him. Her confidence gave him courage.

Now he studied the hard, cruel eyes of Drake and knew that this treacherous swindler meant business. No one would dare play this game and risk letting a client get away. The walrus-mustached man was in for it.

The girl whispered, "What are we going to do?"

"Hold back. Follow them if they march him away. If it wasn't for those darned lights—"

"I've got to get this." Hetty brought the camera up to the ledge and pointed it through the narrow aperture. The three men inside were standing like statues. It was the victim's move, but he was too astonished to do more than tremble.

Archie had momentary visions of a flashlight bulb explosion and the effect it would have upon this tense deadlock. He pressed Hetty's hand.

"Don't do it. That fellow Drake is desperate. He'll start shooting at this service window and ask questions afterwards."

"Don't worry," Hetty whispered. "Everything's O.K."

A moment later, when the three camera subjects broke out of their freeze, Hetty removed the camera. Then Archie knew she had taken a bulb exposure.

In the conference room the victim yielded ground. As he edged toward the door, Drake followed him with the gun on a level with his heart. Meanwhile, Dr. Silverhead went on with his glib chatter. The gunplay was of secondary importance to him. He was talking about experiments and his eagerness to try certain new lenses. He was even thanking the dazed Mr. Rickenthorp for his readiness to co-operate.

As the three of them made their way through the door, Archie lost any hope

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that Rickenthorp might try to break and run. In this moment of danger he was without resources.

"They've got him," Archie whispered. "He wouldn't run out if his own house was on fire."

"Where you going?" the girl asked.

"After them. You stay back. If you don't hear from me within five minutes, call the police."

Archie crept to the door. He ran his hand over the dusty furniture in search of a weapon. Off the top of a heap he took a folding chair.

"Careful," Hetty whispered. "They are coming back."

She waited with him beside the door just inside the deep shadows. The snarling voice of Drake could be heard as he re-entered the next room.

"Don't move, Rickenthorp—I'll be right with you."

The gunman's heavy tread sounded across the conference room floor. He rummaged through the desk and gathered up some papers. The frightened Rickenthorp had found his voice and was beginning to rant. This was an outrage. They were not going to get away with it. If they would only sit down and talk it over sensibly he could make it worth their while to cancel the deal.

Drake gave a cynical laugh.

"This deal is too big to be bought off with cash. Haven't we already told you that Dr. Silverhead is going to revolutionize his profession? What he needs is co-operation from farsighted business men like yourself, Buddy Rickenthorp. All right, you march down and help him put his theories into practice."

This time Drake snapped off the light over the conference desk. Only the dim yellow light halfway down the corridor was burning.

AS THE three men moved along, their jumping shadows retreated from the doorway where Archie and Hetty waited. Archie relaxed his grip on the folding chair. It seemed that the moment for action had passed him by.

"What will they do to him?" Hetty whispered tensely.

"They won't let him out alive, you can be sure of that. The fool! He let himself in for it, but all the same—"

"We've got to do something."

Archie rummaged through the shelves. There were all sorts of kitchen equipment in this place. He grabbed a handful of heavy china teacups. He picked up a butcher knife, but his own boldness frightened him. He dropped it.

All the way down the hall he kept wishing he could change his armful of weapons for a good solid baseball bat.

Hetty was following him, warning him to come back. How could he dare take such a desperate chance? He knew the answer to that one. It was because he was seeing himself in her eyes—bold, foolhardy.

The gun party had disappeared, and the corridor light had gone off when they rounded the corner. Now their footsteps were sounding down a stairway, and the only light was that wafting up from the foot of the staircase. Archie could gauge their progress by the bouncing shadows. If he was swift enough, this was his opportunity. He was sprinting almost noiselessly.

He reached the head of the stairs, folding chair in one arm, teacups in the other. Down the creaky old stairs the solemn trio was marching. They had heard nothing.

With utmost care he placed the folding chair at one side of the top step and three of the teacups at the other.

Before he went into action, he crept

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down to the third or fourth step. Then his good right arm did its stuff. In rapid succession—one, two, three—he hurled the teacups straight at the electric light bulb.

The instant the missiles began whirring through the air there were growls of surprise from Drake and his prisoner.

But the last aim was true, and before Drake could turn, the light bulb was shattered. Archie grabbed up the chair.

The darkness wasn't complete. A dim light filtered up from the floor below. It gave Archie an advantage he had not counted on. As he leaped down the stairs swinging the folding chair over his head, he got a perfect silhouette of Drake coming up with his gun-arm ready.

C-R-A-A-SH!!!

The folding chair landed like a ton of bricks. Drake went down with a breathy "o-o-o-of" like a punctured balloon. Then he and Archie were rolling down the stairs together, and Archie was throwing punches as fast and furious as he could. By the time they hit the floor below, there were four of them in the scramble.

One of them, however, was out for the count, and that one was Drake.

Over the excited mumbling of Dr. Silverhead and the grunts of consternation from Rickenthorp, Archie shouted. He shouted with such excitement in his voice that he hardly knew himself.

"Now get out, you fool, if you've got any sense! This is your chance! Beat it!"

With that, Archie went bounding up the steps, three at a time, hesitating only once. That was to pick up the gun which had dropped on the stairs.

A few minutes later he and Hetty were crossing the city in a taxi.

Archie would never forget that ride. It seemed that the beautiful girl beside him could not get her breath. She kept saying, "How did you do it? Gee, I didn't think you could get away with it. Honest, I never saw anything like it."

"Could you see what happened?"

"First I saw the gunman. Then, when the light went out I just knew he'd be shooting you full of holes. But I had to look anyway. And I was just in time to see you jump down the steps swinging that chair over your head.

"Honest, Archie, I never saw anything like it."

Archie slipped his arm around her and looked into her eyes intently.

"Believe me, I wouldn't have done it if you hadn't been there."

As he said it, Archie knew that he was not kidding this girl. He had been a hero because of her. Without her he might have played the coward. It all added up to something pretty important, and Archie knew it. She had been a good sport to stick with him, and he had fallen hard.

Then he was trying to kiss her, and she was suddenly remembering that they had not known each other before this evening.

"You're a fast worker, Archie, but I think you're just a little excited over all that's happened."

"I know I am," he admitted, "but the evening would not be complete if I didn't kiss you goodnight."

Then they were at the door of her apartment house, and she was in his arms and he was claiming his kiss.

Kisses are known to have curious effects upon beautiful young ladies, but what happened now was more than Archie anticipated. The girl did not melt into his arms—she melted out of them! In fact, she melted out of existence, and left Archie standing there staring.

All he saw was a white paper card floating down to the steps. He picked

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it up, filed it away in Craig's book, sent the taxi on its way and walked home.

CHAPTER VII

Cornelia

AT NINE in the morning the events of the previous night seemed a dream, yea, a nightmare. Archie waited in the reception room on the twenty-first floor of a downtown building. There were no forbidding signs on the door of Hamilton Craig, Architect, but the door was locked.

Archie was in the process of magnifying his fears over the walk-out of Craig and the two strangers of the previous night, when Craig himself strode into the reception room.

"Good morning, Burnette. I see you're right on the dot." Craig's voice was hearty. He was like a man with no troubles in the world.

Archie followed him into the office. The bad news had just as well be broken at once.

"Mr. Craig, what the devil goes on out there on Southwest Boulevard? Are you harboring a gang of racketeers or something?"

Craig laughed lightly. He sat down at his desk and locked his hands back of his head. The whole block was a pretty bad mess, he admitted, but he hadn't had time to straighten things up. He began to sort some charts.

"You see I am making plans," Craig said.

"But if the underworld is going to trespass on your premises—"

"I guess it isn't quite that bad," said Craig. "Of course, after the windows of a building are broken out, it is hard to tell what riffraff may come in. What did you see that aroused your suspicions?"

"Plenty," said Archie. He drew his chair closer to the desk. "After you and those two men passed me, the girl and I started out, like you told us to. And then—"

"Hold on," Craig interrupted, "what girl was this?"

"You know. The one I wanted you to stop and meet. Her name's Hetty Hildreth."

"Oh, yes." Craig gazed up at the ceiling. "She was one of the parade girls. Tell me about her. Did you like her?"

"But this crime racket, Mr. Craig."

"Tell me about the girl."

Archie drew a long breath. He was not sure where to begin. "Gosh, if I could only recite poetry—well, to begin with, she's one swell gal."

Archie found himself growing a bit dreamy as he recited the virtues of Hetty, and before he knew it he was sure he had waxed much too enthusiastic. Craig's eyes were glowing. "But you might not fall for her like I did," Archie said. His instinct told him it was time to pull his punches.

"She sounds interesting."

"You might not care for her. I doubt if you would. She's pretty young—"

"I'd like to meet her. Right away. Do you think it could be arranged?"

Archie fumbled for an answer. "Well—er—it was sorta strange the way I happened onto her."

Craig was eying the little leather book in Archie's pocket.

"No stalling, Burnette. You had just as well get used to this convenience of having beautiful girls at our beck and call. Notice I said *our*. I'll bet Hetty Hildreth would be delighted to have lunch with the two of us."

ARCHIE snapped open the book cover. He was sure that the last of the six cards was the one he wanted,

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and his hands were not nervous. Afterward, recalling this scene, he was certain on that point. Nevertheless, it was the first card that dropped out of the back.

It barely touched the floor, then rose to the level of the table, vanished.

"Ah!" said Craig. "You are becoming accustomed to this clever little gadget."

"It's the wrong one," Archie gasped. "It isn't Het—"

Craig hushed him with a gesture. Out of the air had come a steamy little cloud which presently materialized into a new girl. She was slender, blonde, as beautiful as something out of Hollywood—beautiful in a different way from Hetty, Archie thought. She was still wearing her parade costume.

To Archie the sudden appearance of a beautiful girl was always something of a shock, whether she dropped out of a cloud or merely came around a corner. But he noticed that this young lady wasted only one look on him. Thereafter her eyes were fastened upon Hamilton Craig.

"This is a pleasure, Mr. Craig," she was saying, offering a drooping hand to the handsome architect. "Just call me Cornelia."

"I remember you distinctly," Craig nodded. He, too, was a little confused at having his luncheon plans upset.

"I came to see you on behalf of the six of us."

Cornelia accepted Archie's chair without acknowledging the courtesy. "I would have been here sooner, but as I walked into your private office some practical joker took advantage of me. Now, what we have in mind, we six girls who won the contest for you, is to see if you would like to have us appear in a show. As an advertising stunt I mean. You could call us the Six Craig Girls or—"

"If you will excuse us," Craig interrupted, "I will talk with you in just a few minutes. You'll find a chair in the waiting-room."

"Of course, Mr. Craig." Cornelia glanced at the door apprehensively. "This isn't another one of those electric things, is it? Well, I'll be waiting for you, but I warn you I'm going to land a contract, Mr. Craig."

Craig made an effort to smile politely. He closed the door behind her, and mopping his forehead turned to Archie.

"It appears that your day's work is cut out for you. Get acquainted with her. Report to me later. I'm a pretty busy man myself. Now what about this underworld business? I hope it didn't have anything to do with the old doctor who occupies the south wing of the hospital."

Archie launched into a complete account of his eavesdropping escapade.

Craig took it all in with intense interest. Then he went over the details to be sure he had missed nothing.

"Evidently I should not have allowed my two friends to lead me away," he said. "Was I—er—drunk? Never mind. The trouble lies much deeper than that."

"Seems to me the first thing you need is a good lock on every door."

"Right. And we'll get those broken windows boarded up. I'll make a note of it. The carpenters will be on the job today. As for the doctor, he's an enigma. I suggest you go in and get acquainted with him. Tell him you're working for me. Ask him about his experiments."

Archie tried to imagine himself meeting the doctor after what had occurred last night.

"Are you going to be there, Mr. Craig?"

Craig shot a quick, questioning glance in Archie's direction. "That's

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something else I meant to warn you about. *I am completely unpredictable.* You must not be surprised at my comings and goings. And you are never to stop me for any questions at the mansion. You and I will carry on our discussions here in private. That's all, Burnette."

"Then you are not going to do anything about Drake?"

"That's not your worry. Drake is the doctor's stooge. And the authorities in Southwest Boulevard know all about the doctor. They consider him harmless."

Archie had his doubts. In the waiting-room he tried to work out some plan of action.

But a few minutes later he found that the planning was out of his hands. Craig had arranged for him to take Cornelia to dinner, and after that there would be a round of the smartest shows and night clubs.

"But I must have some clothes," Cornelia said, "and I promised Mr. Craig I would be a good little girl and go out with you if you would buy me some things."

"What sort of things?"

"Just a party dress and some new slippers and things. You don't mind, do you, Archie?" She smiled at him sweetly. "Mr. Craig tells me you are getting a handsome salary."

CHAPTER VIII

Marcus Drake Has a Headache

ARCHIE lost Cornelia that afternoon at the perfume counter. He escaped while most of his first week's salary was still intact.

For his freedom he could thank one Carlo Verrazzano, a huge mountain of a man, who resembled a musician, and was discovered in the midst of a rhapsody upon his celebrated achievements in the fine arts of selling perfume.

Verrazzano's striking appearance was enhanced by a wealth of black hair that hung to his shoulders, plus a trimmed black mustache and a beard. No radio announcer ever advertised milady's perfumes with any more enthusiasm than the rhapsodic Signor Verrazzano.

When this unique salesman began talking in terms of ten-thousand-dollar orders for millionaire customers, Cornelia edged in front of the cluster of listeners to catch his eye. Soon he was buying perfume and accepting the most flattering remarks from the salesman. By the time the other customers were leaving, she was one of his oldest and dearest friends.

The last Archie heard of the conversation she was saying, "But I am sure I could cancel my other dinner engagement for you, Signor Verrazzano."

Archie caught his cue, gave her a farewell wave, and scrammed.

On his way to the mansion Archie was sorely tempted to open the little brown leather book. If he could only be sure of getting Hetty before another Cornelia jumped out—but his instinct for self-preservation told him not to risk it.

"If Craig wants to fire me for losing Cornelia," he thought, "let him do his worst. I ought to be twins for this job—no, sextuplets."

His plan of action was well laid by the time he reached 7599 Southwest Boulevard. Craig had told him to strike up an acquaintance with Dr. Silverhead. All right, he would screw up his courage and face the doctor.

Had Archie known more of the inside situation that he had glimpsed the previous evening, he would have been even more skeptical about making a social call. The doctor and his agent,

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Mr. Drake, were in no mood to receive guests

WHEN Marcus M. Drake caught the blow of the folding chair on the top of his head, he saw a whole galaxy of stars, with several spiral nebulæ thrown in, and instantly one of these engulfed him.

He did not know that he rolled to the bottom of the stairs or that some young man was hammering him with fists. Nor did he realize that the doctor stomped around in great agitation long after the anonymous assailant and the walrus-mustached victim had gone their separate ways.

After an hour or more, Drake awoke to the sound of his own groanings. He opened his eyes to receive the dim light of the second floor corridor.

With consciousness came a surge of anger. There was the absentminded doctor, pacing up and down, tapping his pencil on the wall, talking to himself.

"If I hadn't broken that lens," the doctor was saying, shaking his white goatee in great distress, "everything would be all right. But there will be another lens like that. There must be. As soon as Drake wakes up I'll have him order some equipment. I'll start at once—"

"Stop your damned mumbling," Drake growled, coming up on one elbow. "What happened? Who struck me? Where did they go?"

"I was just thinking, Drake, I'll have you order some—"

"Shut up! And get me up from here!"

Dr. Silverhead was all but impervious to Drake's ill humors. However, he made a show of offering a hand to Drake as the latter groped back toward the stairway on all fours and brought himself up to a sitting position.

Drake turned and stared up into the darkness. His repeated demands as to who his assailants were and where they had gone were lost on the doctor.

"I can't fathom it, Drake. Why do all of our subjects put up such stubborn resistance? Can't you sell the proposition to them?"

"I had Rickenthorp sold, don't ever doubt it," Drake snarled. Automatically his hand went to his pocket. Of all things, his billfold was safe. At least, that hadn't been a frame-up between Rickenthorp and some henchmen. For the moment Drake felt somewhat relieved.

But as soon as he discovered his gun was missing his suspicions were on fire. His temperature mounted, and his head, already aching like fury, was suddenly full of blow torches.

"We are in one devil of a jam, Doc. Somebody's lifted my pistol. There'll be hell busting loose around here before we know it."

The doctor's bleary eyes came down from the ceiling to focus upon Drake. "But what have we done? Nothing except to pursue our rightful scientific interests. My experiments will some day be acclaimed by all the world."

"Yeah? You are so damned innocent, you are."

The words struck fire in the wizened doctor's watery eyes.

"Of course, I'm innocent. You've told me a hundred times over that everything we are doing is perfectly legal."

"All right, all right." The thick-faced man closed his eyes and ran his fingers through his hair savagely.

"You've told me," the doctor pursued, "that you have taken care of everything. I am a man of science. I have no time to delve into the legal tangles that might hamper us. But you have assured me—"

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"Forget it, I say. I don't want to hear any more about it."

But the argument was by no means ended. With the new day the doctor began his worried mumblings afresh. He haunted Drake for one assurance after another. In desperation, Drake piled the lies high. Of course the proper authorities had been consulted. Of course these experiments were licensed. Everything would go on as usual.

"Don't pay any attention to what I said last night. I was probably out of my head."

THE doctor countered with a gleam of logic. If everything was all right, why had Drake been attacked?

"I told you," Drake hedged, "that was just some damned ignoramus. The public can't appreciate what we're doing. But it won't happen again. From now on we'll keep this place guarded."

There was no use confiding any more to Dr. Silverhead. The less he knew the better. This would be a lucrative game only so long as Drake and his two henchmen kept the whys and wherefores under their hats.

But it was a cinch that something had gone haywire last night. How in the devil had Hamilton Craig managed to show up at that time of evening. The henchmen would have to answer for that.

The more Drake puzzled over this, the more those blow torches blasted his brain. In his racket careful timing was everything. He had known that Hamilton Craig was in the Overton Employment office late in the afternoon. And afterward that Craig was lined up with a few engagements for the rest of the evening.

Craig was not a man to miss his appointments.

Why, then, had Craig been found on these premises at the very time he was not wanted?

If Drake could have answered that question, he would have had the key to the whole fiasco.

Unfortunately, Craig *had* shown up, and so Drake's two strong-arm men had been forced to take him for a walk.

And that had left the approaches to Drake's conference room unguarded!

Yes, Mac and Krug would have to answer for that. Here it was high noon and they had not returned.

Drake puffed at the orchid cigarette holder. The empty hallways echoed his impatient pacing.

"When those two lazy louts come in," he told Dr. Silverhead, "send them through to the court. I'm going out and tend my garden."

Drake descended to the basement, donned a pair of unionalls, and sorted over his garden tools. A pleasurable thrill of anxiety surged through him as he made his selection. This was his most useful tool—a pair of pruning shears.

He held them up to the light of the basement window and scrutinized the razor-sharp cutting edge.

As he ascended the steps and wandered out into the enclosed court, he was thinking of a walrus-mustached gentleman named Rickenthorp. If he knew his clients, that gentleman would be too scared to say anything today. A badly frightened man doesn't grow bold overnight.

But by next week Rickenthorp would be telling everyone about his narrow escape. Or would he?

Drake was smiling inwardly now. He snipped off the top of a hollyhock plant, twisted it in his fingers until he reached the old-fashioned well in the center of the court. He bent over the circular brick wall. With his pruning

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shears he sliced away at the hollyhock bud. The fragments fell noiselessly into the shaft of bottomless blackness.

Suddenly Drake was startled by a pleasant voice only a few yards away.

"Hello, sir! Interesting g a r d e n you've got here."

Drake thrust the pruning shears into his unionalls pocket. Before him stood a well dressed young man with quick eyes and a hint of nervousness in his smile.

"What do you want?" asked Marcus M. Drake.

"Just thought I'd drop around and get acquainted with Dr. Silverhead. My name's Archie Burnette."

CHAPTER IX

Green Lights for Murder

MARCUS M. DRAKE had a natural aversion to strangers, especially those that seemed to have their wits about them. This young fellow was alert. But he was too young and kiddish to know much, Drake thought.

"We may be able to use you around here," Drake said presently, after he had listened to the young man's recitation about being hired by Craig, the owner of this property. "So Craig told you to drop around and get acquainted with the Doc, did he? Not a bad idea."

"You work here too?" the young man asked.

"Oh, I putter around in the garden just to pass the time. I'm sorta looking after the doctor. He's got no business judgment whatever. The absent-minded old duffer would let his rent slide for years if it wasn't for me." Drake decided that the newcomer was swallowing his line.

"Not making much, huh?"

"Well, just between you and me, he's got a damned good thing as soon as it hits. That's why I'm staying with him. I'll see that this new owner, Craig, gets all that's coming to him—but I hope he won't get in a hurry for it."

Drake was sure that plug was well placed. This lad would urge Craig to hold off with the evictions and give the delinquent doctor a chance. These thoughts eased Drake's suspicions.

"Through that door?" asked Archie Burnette.

"That's right. You'll find him at work in there. Tell him Drake sent you in to look around. And think nothing of it if he never even sees you. He's that way. And one thing more—don't let him use you in any of his experiments."

"Why not?"

The kid was still wet behind the ears, Drake thought.

"Because we don't let anybody go through the doc's mill unless we register him and give him a physical test and all that."

"Sounds good," said the young man, as he went on his way.

Drake slapped the pruning shears against his side, satisfied. Things would be easier than ever with this stooge of Craig's on the ground. Now if those two lazy louts, Mac and Krug, could get last night's fiasco covered up in time, there'd be more free-wheeling and green lights ahead.

No, there were still a couple of red lights. Drake's blow-torch headache was back again in full fury. He stomped along the path, snipping at every straggling branch he passed.

One of those red lights was that anonymous assailant of last night. Who was he? Where had he come from? Was he a friend of Rickenthorp's? Apparently he had been content to free that walrus-mustached gentleman and

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let it go at that. He hadn't even bothered to recover the money. Evidently he hadn't seen fit to call the police.

But he had taken the gun—a black pistol with a corrugated handle that Drake would know anywhere.

It was the work of an amateur, Drake decided—someone who had bumped in on the conference scene accidentally.

Drake's other red light was this man Craig. He was still an enigma showing up unexpectedly when he was thought to be elsewhere.

Now MacMacklevitch and his buddy straggled into the court. Drake was ready for them with a full head of steam.

WITH careless unconcern Mac rubbed his crooked nose and twisted the tufts of hair that bristled from his scarred right eyebrow. Krug also listened with a show of indifference, all the while whistling little tunes through his teeth. But Drake gave them their orders in no uncertain terms.

"Something slipped last night, and it came near being the end of us. Another break like that and we'll be looking for a new address."

"What happened, boss?"

"Take a look at the stairway up to the conference room. Take a good look, and figure out if you can who lammed me over the skull with a chair. That's your first job, gents. Trace it down and don't miss anything.

"Second, you've got to bump off Rickenthorp. *He missed the mill.* We had him on his way when the lights went out and I went with 'em.

"Third job is to get an angle on Craig."

"We're not worried about him, boss. He went out and played table tennis with us like a pal. We kept him at it till we figured your deal was over."

"You figured wrong," Drake growled. "And it's not the first time, you know that."

"But, boss," Mac raised his scarred eyebrow cheerfully. "We've sewed him up. He's right in the palm of our hand—and a Craig in the hand is worth two hundred thousand or so in the sock; ain't it so, Krug?"

"Cut out the gags and tell him what we've done," said Krug.

"What have you done?" Drake studied the two thugs skeptically. They'd better not start having ideas of their own.

"We've landed jobs with Craig, keepin' watch on this place while he remodels it. He's got a young fellow named Burnette on daytime duty, and he's gonna hire a landlady and a staff of girls to run the office end in the mansion—"

"It's an advertising stunt," Krug explained.

"And right away they'll start renting apartments in this building to workers and their families."

"The hell!" Drake growled. "Couldn't you stall him off?"

"It's easier than that. Ain't we the night watchmen? All right, we guard the place from ten o'clock on. Your customers come right in, same as always, on a one-way ticket."

"It sounds not so bad," said Drake, still feeling doubtful.

"It's good," said Krug. "He trusts us."

"It may work for awhile," Drake continued.

"It'll work until the remodeling gets back to our half of the building. What more could you ask?"

Drake gave a low laugh. "That ought to line our pocketbooks so we can retire. If it don't, we'll hit Craig for an extension. He might even find himself so tangled up in Doc Silverhead's web by that time that he

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wouldn't have any room to kick."

With this outlook Marcus M. Drake forgot his headache and went about his gardening.

Before a week passed the delightful little scheme for swindling and murdering the doctor's prospective investors seemed to be back on a smooth track. The walrus-mustached Mr. Rickenthorp had been quietly bumped off. The newly employed guards were on their job. The doctor's mysterious experiments continued, completely in secret, and the surrounding public—including one Archie Burnette—never guessed that the doctor's vision was to be able *to turn one person into two—so that any man could have as many duplicates as he wanted.*

CHAPTER X

Verrazzano in Distress

ARCHIE BURNETTE'S visit to the laboratories of Dr. Silverhead left him in great consternation. It was more than he could fathom. What did a successful business man like Hamilton Craig mean by allowing the doctor to carry on such a mysterious enterprise on these premises?

As Archie wandered back to the oaken reception room, he felt compelled to bring matters to a decision. Either he must walk out on this job or he must ally himself to Hamilton Craig, come what may.

"Darned if I can figure that guy out," Archie said to himself. "He's as jumpy as a grasshopper—always turning up in a new place. I can't figure him out."

Archie was recalling Craig's words of that morning. "Was I drunk? . . . Never mind."

It would seem that Craig had no recollection of his activities of the previous evening.

Was it possible that this successful young architect was a split personality? In his role as a business man, could he forget that he was harboring a group of criminals in these buildings? Or was he somehow innocent?

Archie needed the job, but it wasn't that which made his decision take root so much as another factor. In his pocket was the mysterious book containing six cards—no, five—Cornelia was absent. At any rate, it was Archie's natural curiosity regarding this strange phenomenon which determined him to stay on.

Heavy footsteps sounded outside the entrance, and the vast form of Carlo Verrazzano, the perfume salesman, appeared. He lifted his hat, made a graceful bow, and looked about eagerly.

"Ah, sir, you are the verree man I weesh to see!"

Archie placed himself back of the desk and prepared to resist a sales talk. The big man was smiling down at him, making grandiose gestures. Archie only stared at him coldly.

"What can I do for you?"

"The beeooutiful Cornelia—alas!—she has went. But I think she come here, maybee?"

"You're barking up the wrong tree, friend. I haven't seen her. What makes you think she would come here?"

"Ah, she have a queeck talk with Mr. Craig. They make business plans. And when she come back to me she only talk money, money, money."

Verrazzano's face grew sad, and he touched his eyes with a handkerchief. "No longer she smile at me so sweet."

"Well, what then? Did she walk out on you?"

"It all happen so sudden I do not know."

"Where did you leave her? At Craig's office?"

"No, no, no. It was while we were

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having dinner that Mr. Craig come and talk. When he was gone, she no more listen to my stories, how I sell ten thousand, twenty thousand dollars of the gorgeous perfume. I have her walk with me in the Italian garden. Ah, eet is beeoutiful. The heaven full of stars —sweet music. Dancing."

"You were at a night club? She got away from you in the garden?"

"She disappears from me like that!" Verrazzano snapped his fingers.

Archie scowled. "I don't like this, Verrazzano. I'm responsible for that girl. I'll have to go and find her."

THE perfume salesman's calf-like eyes brightened with hope. "You weel bring her back to me?"

"Let me get this straight," said Archie. "Stars, music and dancing—and so you tried to kiss her."

"Ah, you were there?"

"And then she disappeared."

"So! You saw eet happen!"

"I saw nothing," said Archie, "but I will go and find her if you will give me the address. Poor girl, she probably was trampled under foot."

"The address, I have eet here. So I would remember, I queeck wrote eet on a card that I find on the floor."

Archie scrutinized the card that the sadfaced Romeo was handing him.

"For safekeeping," said Archie smiling, "I'll pack it away in this little book. Run along, pal, and stop your sniveling. Your Cornelia is safe and sound."

Senor Verrazzano made three deep bows and gushed his appreciation that his Cornelia would not be lost. He offered to taxi Archie to the night club to effect the rescue and made other suggestions which Archie found equally ridiculous. In the end, Verrazzano had to be satisfied with leaving his telephone number, in hopes that Cornelia would call him.

When the temperamental Italian was gone Archie laughed to himself. Cornelia was again safe in the book . . .

That evening Craig came to the mansion to set forth some further instructions. As rapidly as these rooms could be made over into apartments, the business of renting them would proceed. And the six girls who made up the pages of Craig's book had indeed landed a contract.

"We will use their picture in our newspaper advertisements," said Craig. He laid before Archie a photograph that had been taken during the parade. The six girls, all dressed in colorful Oriental costumes would serve as an attractive eye-catcher in any ad.

"So Cornelia did put it over with you?" said Archie.

"Cornelia—yes. Do you know her? She's a very fine business woman. Now if you will excuse me, I have some business calls to make."

As Archie retreated through the copper-studded doorway to the reception room, he pondered the strangeness of Craig's words.

Did not Craig remember the meeting of the three of them that morning? It was curious that his memory was so hazy.

Now Archie could hear a telephone chat, highly informal, as if between two old friends. And to Archie's astonishment, Craig was reciting the full story of his adventure of the previous evening. This time his memory seemed to be fresh on every detail.

"They were just a pair of pick-up friends that I happened to meet at a bar . . . Mac Macklevitch and Krug. They're all right. Darned good at table tennis . . . sure, I'll be seeing more of them. Fact is, I've hired them to help around here . . . he told you? . . . oh, him . . . yes, he seems to be pretty reliable."

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And then Craig's voice became so low that Archie could no longer hear.

As Archie retired to a third floor room which had been assigned him, he knew he was too confused over these growing mysteries to formulate any theory toward their solution. The last words he had heard Craig say over the 'phone were:

"We had better talk this over together. Can you risk coming out yet tonight? It's late enough that no one will see you."

As Archie was about to fall asleep, he heard a car stop in front of the mansion. He peered out the window. Coming up the walk was a tall, straight young man that Archie would have sworn in court was none other than Hamilton Craig.

CHAPTER XI

The Literal Doctor

THERE should have been traffic lights in the reception room to handle the crowds in the days that followed. The mansion suddenly became the busiest place on Southwest Boulevard.

The carpenters and plasterers and decorators were supposed to use a side entrance, but they continually found their way into the front office, as the white tracks on the oak flooring attested.

And prospective renters—they came in droves. Nine-tenths of them came merely out of curiosity. Many were attracted by the clever advertising in the daily papers.

The north wing of the old hospital was being transformed rapidly. A few sample apartments were already being exhibited.

As the advertisements had promised, visitors were conducted through the building by beautiful girls—the "Craigettes."

Archie was amazed to see how this advertising scheme worked. He had supposed that these six girls in his book would rebel at the idea of remaining prisoners, so to speak, of Hamilton Craig. In their readiness to assume their duties as usherettes, they were virtually automatons. That is, they would emerge from hiding whenever they were needed. Archie had only to remove a card from the book, toss it into the air, and count to ten. A beautiful usherette would appear before him.

Craig was unquestionably pleased with the way things were going. But he was by no means complacent. He had an eye out for troubles, and Archie soon realized that he was worried on two counts.

One of these worries had to do with the usherettes, the other with Dr. Silverhead. He would frequently call Archie in for conference.

"Who is the new girl who was on duty this morning?"

"The platinum blonde? Her name's Genevieve."

"Genevieve—oh, yes. I remember choosing her for the parade. Hollywood stuff, that gal. What's she like when you get to talking with her?"

Archie shrugged. "We're not speaking. She can't see me."

"That's s t r a n g e. Whenever she passes this door she sends me a smile that would do for a toothpaste ad."

"That's because y o u ' r e Hamilton Craig," said Archie. "Besides, she's practicing for movie close-up, or I miss my guess. When she first materialized she walked straight to a mirror. That's where she's been most of the time since. S-s-s-sh!"

The platinum blonde was passing just outside the office door, leading a party of wealthy sightseers.

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"Look at her give 'em the cold shoulder. She's a snob, if I ever saw one."

"What happened? Did you two quarrel?"

"I laughed at her," said Archie. "You see when Benjamin Dodge, the electrician, came in to inspect our wiring, Genevieve took him for a prospective tenant. She showed him all around and brought him down and tried to sign him up for an apartment. Then he told her who he was, thanked her and walked out. He took the wind out of her sails. I sat there laughing, and she hasn't seen me since."

Craig nodded, mildly amused. He walked to the office door, and his eyes followed Genevieve out of sight.

Another party arrived. Archie caught his cue. He opened the book, tossed out a card, and presently Hetty was before him, her snappy black eyes facing him accusingly.

"Archie, have you straightened out that matter—?"

"The customers are waiting, Hetty."

"But Archie, I have got to talk with you."

"The customers — Miss Hildreth," Craig cut in.

OBEDIENTLY Hetty went on her way. Craig had been disturbed before by Hetty Hildreth's behavior. She seemed always to have some personal problem for which she demanded Archie's attention.

"It's about a picture she took," Archie started to explain. "I think we ought to talk about it. Once you suggested that we have luncheon together, the three of us."

Craig frowned. "Did I suggest that? Well, I'm much too busy."

There was Craig's memory gone rusty again. All right, let him forget his former interest in Hetty. Archie would not be the loser.

That afternoon Craig had a long conference with Dr. Silverhead. When the office door finally opened and the white-haired doctor shuffled away mumbling to himself, Archie was called in. He found Craig smoking nervously, looking haggard.

"Sit down, Archie." Craig paced from one window to another, rarely facing Archie. "It beats the devil how a man can be as smart as that doctor and still too dumb to talk straight English."

"Can't you get him to pay his rent?" Archie asked. "Or are you trying to move him out?"

Craig crushed his cigarette in the ash-tray.

"It goes much deeper than that. What I'm about to tell you is strictly confidential. A slick lawyer could do me plenty of damage if he got next to this."

Archie waited, choked with silence. Could it be that Craig had let himself in for a share in this murder racket?

"It all started innocently enough," Craig said. "Being a bachelor with money, I found myself subject to all sorts of intrusions — solicitors and agents for charity, social butterflies, and what not. I suppose I should have hired a hard-boiled doorman, who would simply turn people away. But I took a notion to have some fun, and that was the fatal step."

Craig chuckled lightly as he recalled his first experiments in equipping his house with mechanical ghosts, black cats and hoot owls.

"I wanted a dancing skeleton, and someone referred me to Dr. Silverhead. That's where I got in bad."

"I don't understand."

"He took me too literally. He came through with a *living* skeleton. Where he got the poor fellow, or *how* he got him, I don't know. It still gives me the creeps when I think of entering my

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house to discover that gruesome heap of skin and bones dancing to his death in my doorway."

Archie shuddered. "What — what happened?"

"Never mind," said Craig, "that's all past. I resolved not to repeat that mistake. But having located Dr. Silverhead here on Southwest Boulevard, I saw my chance to take over these buildings as a real estate investment. Of course, I want to get rid of the doctor."

"Won't he go peaceably?"

Craig shook his head dubiously. The conference with the doctor had left him even more uncertain.

"He leaves all business matters to this gardener, Drake. But I certainly don't want to get mixed up with *him*. I'd fire them out of here yet today if I could be sure the action would not boomerang. But if the doctor knows it, he has a choke-hold on me. In fact, a couple of them."

"The skeleton in the doorway . . ."

"The other matter was the transformation of these girls into cards. Maybe there aren't any specific laws to cover such unusual cases, but I'd hate to stand trial in the courts for what happened when they walked through this copper-studded doorway."

AT LAST Archie knew he was getting next to the source of this strange phenomenon. Was it true that Craig had deliberately conceived this scheme and employed a scientist to carry it out?

"Again I protest my innocence," Hamilton Craig said. "It was that doctor's damnable habit of interpreting orders *literally*. I thought I was giving him a harmless instruction. I said, 'All I want you to do is to fix something in this office doorway to make people go away.' Note my words: 'make people go away.'"

"I get it," said Archie.

"So did the doctor. But I didn't. Even when he wrote my words down on paper and had me sign my name, I didn't guess the vicious thing that was in his mind. I remember that he inquired whether I meant to get rid of them for good. I replied that they could leave their cards—that would be sufficient. Then he jotted down something more and said I should leave it to him; he would fulfill my orders to the letter."

Archie found himself gazing in awe at the row of copper points in the Gothic doorway. "And so—"

"And so a few weeks later, as I was making ready to move in here, I received a written report from the doctor, informing me that the experiment had been successful. Rats and guinea pigs were *two-dimensionalized*, as he called it, by this new instrument, and he had now installed it in my office doorway. Anyone who entered while the switch was on would immediately undergo a molecular transformation, being reduced in size to a card that would fit neatly into an address book."

"Ye gods!" Archie gasped.

"I received this word—er—by telephone soon after the parade. I was told that the six girls were already on their way out to see me. When I came in and snapped the switch off, I found here on my desk six cards waiting for me. The deed had been done."

Craig was pacing the floor again. Archie found himself in a mental whirlpool.

"If I understand you correctly, Mr. Craig, you did not intend it to happen this way—in spite of your plan to choose from these six girls for your marriage."

"My marriage!"

Craig turned sharply. And there was anger in his surprised query. "Who

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said anything about marriage?"

Archie drew back defensively. "But you told me yourself that within thirty days you expected to marry one of these—"

"Did I say that? Oh . . ." For a moment Craig stood speechless, shifting his eyes from Archie to the telephone and to the office door. He regained his poise.

"All right, I seem to have told you everything. Anyway, you can see I'm in a devil of a jam until I get rid of this devilish doctor. No telling what he'll do next. I have tried to put him to work on this problem of bringing the girls back to their normal state *permanently.*"

"Evidently he can do anything," Archie commented sarcastically.

"He wouldn't give me any satisfaction," said Craig. "He said it would take lots of experimenting before he could undo what he has done. And he rambled on with some theories that all living matter may have progressed from a two-dimensional state into a three. He thinks the guinea pigs he transformed have a strong instinct to lapse back into the two-dimensional state whenever they face a crisis."

"Does Marcus M. Drake know about all this?" Archie asked anxiously.

"I doubt it. The doctor is not communicative. But the minute I put him under too much pressure he may confide in Drake. When that happens, they will build a fire under me."

CHAPTER XII

Vision of Murder

WOULD Hamilton Craig marry before his thirty days were up?

As long as Archie kept busy at the mansion he could almost forget that that question was hanging fire. But when he was called downtown for a private conference in the architect's studio, he would come away realizing that this matter outweighed everything else.

"Out of any half dozen good looking girls," Craig had repeated on this particular visit, "there ought to be at least one that could endure being married to a stubborn bachelor like me."

"The wrong attitude," Archie had commented mentally, but not aloud. "Any one of those girls could go for you in a big way if you'd quit acting like women are poison."

For Hamilton Craig did act that way, Archie thought. When it came to snobbery, that platinum blonde named Genevieve had nothing on Hamilton Craig. Wasn't it a bit absurd, thought Archie, that in spite of all the time Craig spent in the mansion, while these usherettes were coming and going on all sides of him, he should call Archie downtown to discuss these girls, one by one?

"You should know them as well as I do," Archie had said bluntly on this occasion.

"I think I'm best acquainted with Hetty, from what you've told me. But you'd better name them over again. Not too fast, Archie."

"Hetty . . . Cornelia . . . Genevieve . . . Grace . . . Patsy . . . and Linda Lee. There you are. Take your choice. They're six of a size, all beautiful, and all probably in love with you."

"Not so fast, Archie. Tell me about them again—slowly. You may skip Hetty. She's the camera girl with the snappy brown eye—the one who went with you the night you spied on Drake and the doctor. And you may skip Cornelia. I discovered her adoration for me and my checkbook in two minutes. But she has a good business head. This contract she dragged out of me is proving a good investment. Next—Genevieve."

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"Genevieve and I still aren't speaking," said Archie. "I'm not high-toned enough for her. Maybe it's because she's a platinum—or it might be that she has ancestors."

"Yes, I've heard about her."

"*Heard* about her? She wastes a smile on you every time she passes you."

"Do I—er—return the courtesy?"

This was too much for Archie. If Hamilton Craig was so absent-minded that Genevieve's expensive smiles failed to penetrate, he'd better remain a bachelor, and let the uncle's fortune go to charity.

"To finish calling the roll, there's Grace, Linda Lee, and Patsy. Grace never has much to say except when she's checking up on the rights and wrongs of something. She has such a busy conscience that I feel guilty every time I see her. But she says she'll work as long as you don't profiteer on your tenants or tell any white lies in your sales talks. She's very strict. You can see it in those cold green eyes."

"Yes, very strict but very attractive. Next—Linda Lee."

"She's the Southern gal that chatters on and on like a meadowlark without a care in the world. . . . And Patsy . . . she's the red-head that carries chips on each shoulder. She'd rather fight than eat. Nothing's happened so far that hasn't made her mildly furious. She got sore waiting for her pay, but she was a helluva lot sorer when she got it. I figured you'd fire her the first time she angered a customer."

"I suppose I should—"

"But the customers seem to fall for her, in spite of belligerence. Her record is still tops."

"Remarkable."

"That's exactly what you said when you told all this to me yesterday. Look here, Mr. Craig. Can it be that Dr. Silverhead has done something to you so that you have two sets of memories—one for this downtown studio, and the other for the office out at the mansion?"

Archie meant this question to be taken as facetious, even though it was a joke born of exasperation. But Craig caught his breath, his eyes blinked defensively, and he made no answer. He was blushing.

"Heck, I—I didn't mean anything serious, Mr. Craig," Archie stammered, hastening to cover over this mysterious sensitive something that he had crashed into. "I know you're a very busy man. I'll be helping you every way I can."

"I'm depending upon you. In fact," Craig concluded in a confidential tone, "I'm going ahead with the arrangements for the wedding."

"And the lucky girl is—?"

"One of the six Craigettes," Craig said with a chuckle that helped him recover from his recent embarrassment. "It's much too early to settle on the final details."

NOW Archie sat in the barroom just off Southwest Boulevard munching a corned-beef sandwich. This slightly dank beer joint was as a rule one place where Archie could be alone with his thoughts. A sour-looking stranger with the deep circles around his eyes was growing drowsy over a drink. The bartender was lost in a newspaper. The juke-box was thumping away with heavy rhythm and a minimum of melody.

This place would soon be gone, Archie reflected. The little lobby and the dilapidated apartments that filled this west wing of the old hospital building were due for an overhauling, and Craig was the architect with the magic touch.

Archie couldn't see who the two men were who occupied the end booth; much

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less could he catch any of their low-spoken conversation audible between juke-box records. But he caught sight of a stubby brown hand tapping a monocle on the table-top. It was a gesture that sent chills racing through Archie's spine.

"Change, please," Archie said, abruptly, forgetting to finish his sandwich.

He walked down to the end of the block, crossed the street, loafed along the windows, all the while keeping a sharp eye on the beer joint.

No one came or went.

"I'm in no hurry," Archie said to himself. "I'll stick around till the convention's over."

He killed half an hour walking up and down the street and finally sauntered into a lonesome hamburger den. Here he had a good view across the street and down a quarter of a block.

"Two hamburgers and two coffees, pal," he said. "My friend will be here shortly."

While the man had his back turned, frying hamburgers, Archie got out his little leather book and chose a card with care. He flipped it into the air.

"I've ordered for you, Hetty." Archie had opened and closed the door so the hamburger man wouldn't be too surprised over the new arrival. A girl as pretty as Hetty, dressed in a bright Oriental costume—the official uniform of the Craigettes—was sure to make any man look twice.

"Pray, what are we doing here?" Hetty asked in a guarded tone.

"Keeping our eyes open for trouble," Archie whispered. "Gosh, you must have swell sleeping. You look fresh like the daisies. What do you dream when you're packed away in my notebook?"

"Dream? I've forgotten what the word means," said Hetty. "It's the blankest sensation you can imagine—like some sort of long-lost rest that you've been craving all your life."

"You'll have to tell me more when there's time. For Craig's sake we've got to find out how to get you girls over these magic processes. But we'll talk about that later. Just now—" Archie made certain that only Hetty could hear him—"it's that tavern door . . . I'm sure Marcus M. Drake is putting the screws on a new prospect."

Hetty's sharp brown eyes were full of questioning.

"Archie, I've missed out on almost everything since that one dreadful night. Did you and Mr. Craig ever get the police on the job?"

"No. Not exactly. But Craig says the police know about Dr. Silverhead. They think he's eccentric but harmless."

"Archie, in this camera I have a photograph that would *convict*—" Hetty broke off sharply, for the hamburger man had been distracted from his radio. She resumed her whispering. "Why, Archie? *Why* hasn't Craig set the law on those boys . . . Well?"

"I can't answer that, Hetty."

THE girl's eyes grew hot with suspicion. "Archie, I don't want to be jumping at conclusions. But it looks to me as if our boss is mixed up in a murder racket."

"No—you're mistaken."

"Then tell me why he doesn't get busy and clean it out, Archie." She was clutching his hand, searching his eyes intently. "Please, Archie, if you've any answer tell me. I couldn't bear to think that *you* might be in on it too."

Archie's heart beat fast. Her words somehow took his breath away—as if it mattered so much to her that he kept in the clear. At once he was feeling the burden of this trouble as never before. This trap was closing in, slowly but surely, and his good friend Hamilton

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Craig was caught in it.

"Maybe it isn't what we think," Archie suggested, making a foolish attempt to be optimistic. "Maybe the doctor's experiments would be no more serious than—say, for example—transforming people so they can be carried as cards in a book."

"I suppose you consider *that* an honorable experiment."

"Well, to tell the truth," said Archie, "I'm a little surprised that there hasn't been any complaint on the part of you girls. You seem to be enjoying yourselves."

"We *seem* to be—for two or three good reasons," said Hetty, a note of bitterness in her tone. "Some of us girls are dead certain there'll be a pot of gold at the foot of this rainbow for one of us, if we can hold on until Hamilton Craig makes his choice.

"For my part that's so much foolishness. But if I were going to drag someone like you or Dr. Silverhead or Hamilton Craig into the criminal courts for involving me in a magic trick that keeps me out of social circulation half the time, do you think I'd go around forewarning you? No. So there may be a second reason that we girls *seem* to be complacent. Think it over and weep."

"I'll just think it over," said Archie. "Any more reasons?"

"The third one is real, no question about it. There *is* a satisfaction—a peace beyond that of any sleep—that comes whenever we transform into our inanimate selves." Hetty drew a deep breath. "The wonder is that we're so willing to come back to normal life whenever you call us."

Archie attended these words as if they were messages from another world—a glimpse of some weird realm of life that he would never know.

As a result of these ponderings he felt a strange throb of admiration and respect when he looked across the street to see Dr. Silverhead trudging along. It was an emotion he didn't intend, being utterly opposed to the judgments that were guiding his actions. But there it was, and it was an honest admission that yonder crack-brained scientist must have seen his way into some remarkable miracles.

"Do I see Drake and his guest at the tavern doorway?" Hetty asked.

Across the street the three men had assembled—Drake, Dr. Silverhead, and their tall, well dressed "guest." Evidently Drake was introducing this newcomer to the doctor, for there was a moment of handshaking. Then the doctor hurried on his way.

In another minute the conference ended, Drake disappeared into the tavern, and the tall stranger strode down the street toward the car line.

Archie wanted to follow him, but he thought better of it. Undoubtedly, Drake's eyes were following this man to make sure there were no officers on the trail. Archie turned to Hetty.

"Would you know him if you saw him again?"

"I think so," said Hetty. "Notice how he carries his left shoulder higher than his right, and keeps looking around as if he thought someone was watching him."

"We're lucky if someone isn't watching us," said Archie. "We had better have another coffee."

Hetty was looking at him curiously. "I know what you're planning, Archie. You're going to keep guard over that conference room again tonight. Aren't you? . . . Well, I'm going with you. This is my deal as much as yours."

Archie caught her by the arm and started to draw her toward him.

"No," said Hetty, drawing away from him. "Don't you dare put me back in the book!"

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ARCHIE'S and Hetty's watch for the return of the "high-shouldered stranger" extended through the next three days and nights. The man did not return, and they decided he must have rejected Marcus M. Drake's investment plan. They relaxed their vigilance.

Nevertheless, Archie was on the alert. His habits of watching and listening for signs of danger could not be turned off like electric lights. In his room he had placed his bed near the west window, where he could keep watch over the court, and there he was sleeping on the night of his terrifying dream.

From the strenuous three days past, Archie was dog-tired, and on this night he meant to get a solid night's sleep. His last comforting thought was that no lights burned in Drake's conference room.

Soon he was lost in sleep, and then came the dreadful series of nightmares. Weird and fantastic images played through his mind, trying to startle him out of his rest. But through it all he kept resolving not to be disturbed. These phantasmagoric pictures, these shifting shadows, these creeping creatures of the night were but the stuff of dreams.

Nevertheless, one of these scenes cut such a deep path through his troubled mind that he seemed to see it over and over through the rest of the night. At dawn he awoke and stared dizzily into the courtyard. That was where it happened, that moonlight murder that had haunted him all night long.

There were the steps, the circling path, the extending arms of hollyhocks that had brushed them as they passed —those two shadowy figures who had walked to the well.

In the scene before Archie's eyes, every detail was perfect. He knew the very spot where the two men had stood as they looked over the low wall into the well. The man on this side had been Marcus M. Drake. The other was the tall, high-shouldered stranger. The quick flash of scissor blades had come from Drake's right hand. From the tall stranger had come the stifled outcry mingled with choking and gurgling.

On the instant, the steel-bladed tool had been tossed aside, and Drake's arms had hurled the other man headlong into the black well. In Archie's nightmares the rest had been a series of sounds— the heavy splash that echoed up from the depths, the long stillness, then the slow tread of Drake wending his way back to the arcade. And later, the thin spray of water that played over the walls and the stone railing and the well.

If Archie had been sure this was only a nightmare, he would have told Hetty all about it. But as the details kept coming back to him clearer and clearer, he decided he must keep this dream to himself.

CHAPTER XIII

Enter Whiskey Phil

THE leather-upholstered chairs that lined the walls of the oaken reception room were the public's first sample of the comforts and luxuries of Craig's Southwest Boulevard Apartments.

In Archie's opinion those chairs were much too comfortable. They made the room as inviting as a hotel lobby, and many persons with little or no business would be content to while away a couple of hours on the pretext of waiting to see someone. All of which added to the day's confusion.

This morning Verrazzano was on hand again, inquiring specifically for Cornelia, and angling for an introduction to Genevieve. While he waited he tried to corner a prospective tenant for

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a perfume sales talk, and Archie had to speak to him.

The sad-eyed man with the concentric circles around his eyes was here again, asking about Grace. As usual he was in a near-stupor from intoxication. Archie had seen him several times at the bar on the west side of the block and by this time knew him to be Philip Parker, better known as Whiskey Phil.

He was an uncle of Grace, the usherette who lived in a realm of such carefully strained morality that she could scarcely breathe without consulting her conscience. He had come several days before to take her home.

But Grace seldom came on duty before noon, and by that time Whiskey Phil was usually too far gone to remember his mission. He whiled away his cynical forenoons and soggy afternoons in Craig's block, running up a bill and accomplishing nothing.

This morning Grace was called on duty early, owing to the unaccountable absence of Patsy. As a result, she and her uncle clashed for a showdown.

"You ran out on your home, so you did," Whiskey Phil growled. "I'm supposed to bring you back. Not that I give a damn personally."

"I have made my decision," Grace declared. "I can't endure that low environment any longer."

"So it's low, is it? So that's what you think of your home."

"It's low because you're always there, you and the demon that lives in your heart. That's why I was glad to come away."

"But I'm not there, I'm here," Whiskey Phil mocked. "How can you stand it sticking 'round this dump with demons like me around?"

Archie tried to intercede. In the interests of propriety Mr. Parker should simply state his business and go on his way.

"That's what I'm doing, ain't it? Say, where'd I see you before?"

"I work here for Hamilton Craig," said Archie.

"That's nothing to be so swelled up about. What kind of a joint does Craig run here? Do *you* know? Maybe you do and maybe you don't. If you'd keep your ears open the way I do—ugh, now I know. It was around at the tavern one afternoon. That's where I saw you. You was spying on Drake and that other guy."

Grace tried to apologize for her uncle's blustering. "Please, Uncle, go on away."

"I'll go when I've found out something; not before. When I go back and your folks ask me all about you, what am I gonna say? How am I gonna convince 'em it took me all these days to get in a word edgewise?"

"Simply tell them the truth," said Grace coldly. "I was always busy and you were always intoxicated."

"But when I came here yesterday, and the morning before, and the day before that, asking for you, why didn't they call you? Where were you?"

THE question brought a deep blush to Grace's cheeks. Her standards of right and wrong wouldn't let her swerve from complete honesty, but this question was hard to answer. Her uncle followed through doggedly.

"If you're in your room, why don't they call you down to see me? Why do they always say they'll have to locate some guy by the name of Archie Burnette—"

"That's me," Archie spoke up, trying to rise to the girl's defense.

"And I suppose," said Whiskey Phil cynically, "you're the housemother of the girls' dormitory, Mr. Burnette?"

"Uncle, you don't understand!" Grace cried, growing as red as fire.

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"You're darned right I don't," said Whiskey Phil, pushing toward the door of Hamilton Craig's private office. "But going to. I'll see the boss."

"I can assure you," said Archie, stepping in his path, "that Craig has hired a matron to supervise the living quarters of these usherettes, if that's what's bothering you. Under ordinary conditions we expect the girls to live in their rooms."

"Yeah? There must be a lot of extraordinary conditions around here, all the trouble they've had trying to find Grace—"

Archie shot out with a good right fist that struck with a heavy smack on the fellow's jaw. The bleary eyes rolled and the puffy rings around them shuddered, but Whiskey Phil didn't go down. He was almost too soggy to feel the blow. It would have taken a freight engine to knock him out.

Nevertheless, he was quite aware that he had been hit, and he changed his mind about walking into Hamilton Craig's office. He stood gazing respectfully at Archie, and as he spoke he grinned sheepishly.

"That throws a different light on the matter. Don't ask me to explain it, but I'd swear in court that everything around here is on the up-and-up. And anybody knows there never was a straighter gal than—hey! Where is she?"

Archie glanced around the reception room. Verrazzano had cornered two more visitors with his perfume case, and none of them saw what happened to the usherette in the center of the room. The last of the steamy image faded into the air.

Poor Grace! The insults she had picked out of her uncle's careless talk had been too much for her, Archie realized. By this time he knew the secret of these mysterious metamorphoses. Any overwhelming crises were what caused these girls to revert to cards.

Whiskey Phil stood as motionless as a lightning-struck tree for a full thirty seconds. Then he caught Archie by the arm to feel his muscle.

"Talk about a wallop! Man, you don't know your strength. For a minute you had me seeing blindspots.

He looked around as if wondering which exit his niece had taken, not realizing that Archie was packing her away in a leather booklet.

"Tell her to look out for herself," said Whiskey Phil, groping down the steps outside the door. "And she needn't worry about me. I'll be all right as soon as I find a bar."

PATSY, the red-haired usherette with special talents for scrapping, was not among those present on this particular morning.

Her absence was inexplicable. The matron and some of the other girls remembered that she was last seen talking with Hamilton Craig late the previous evening. But no one had heard her speak of leaving for the night.

Now it was mid-forenoon and Craig's office door had not yet opened. Archie knocked. There was no response, so he turned a key and walked in.

Hamilton Craig had evidently left early for his downtown studio. If so, he had neglected to leave a list of instructions on his desk. As a rule, he would call Archie in and deliver the day's orders in person.

Archie's senses were on the alert. The too, too realistic dream of last night's murder by moonlight filled his black mood. He had meant to put some point-blank questions to Craig before any such trifles as rent bills or carpenters' jobs could intrude.

Beyond Craig's office were his living and sleeping rooms and his private en-

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trance on the north. Archie ventured into the rooms, after receiving no answer to his knock.

Craig's bed had not been slept in.

Archie returned to the private office, picked up the telephone, and called the architect's studio.

Hamilton Craig answered. Archie gave a gasp of relief.

"Anything wrong, Archie?"

"If *you're* all right, there's nothing wrong," said Archie. "I missed seeing you this morning, and when I looked through your rooms just now I decided you must have been out all night."

"Oh, well, that's nothing," Craig laughed. "It could happen to anyone."

"Not that it's any of my business," said Archie, "but do you have one of the usherettes with you?"

"Er—am I supposed to have?"

"Well, the matron and I have accounted for only five this morning, and they say you were talking with Patsy last night—she's the missing one."

Craig laughed, not too comfortably. "Kinda putting me on the spot, aren't you?"

Archie wasn't at all satisfied with Craig's evasive answer. "All right, I'll assume you haven't seen Patsy since last night. I'll send out a search party."

"Better do that. If she's herself, there's no reason to be worried. But if she's changed back to a card, anything could happen. You can't watch those cards too closely."

Archie wanted to know whether Craig would come out early that evening, and as strongly as he dared over the telephone, he suggested that the air was full of trouble. But Craig's responses were exasperatingly indefinite. Archie hung up and walked out.

He walked into the court.

THE fragrance of shrubbery and the bright faces of hollyhocks did nothing to lift his mood. The beauty of these surroundings was to him the camouflage of a trap. He was moving through the territory of his enemy.

He forced himself to walk leisurely, to seem unconcerned. But the arcade of the old hospital building formed an almost complete rectangular enclosure around him. In this moment he could understand the terrors of the claustrophobe.

At the other end of the curved path was Marcus Drake. Archie pretended not to see him, but the snip, snip, snip of the pruning shears could be heard anywhere within the court. A first-rate actor, that man Drake. As he jogged along one might easily believe his whole heart was in this garden.

Archie drew a long, tense breath as he slowly circled the well. His eyes missed nothing. The stone railing had been showered by the garden hose in recent hours. Thin, muddy streams could be seen at the concrete base.

On Archie's third time around the well, he discovered a slight break in the surface of the ground a few feet beyond the base. In his dream, a steel tool had been tossed to the ground. But no longer was that gruesome event a dream. He was coming to grips with reality at last.

Presently he saw Marcus Drake trudging toward him. He pretended not to see. He was interested in looking down the well, as any curious visitor might be.

"Don't fall in there, boy." Drake started to walk on past. Then he turned back. "If you see your boss any time soon, tell him I'd fix this place up if he'd allow me my expenses. Nothing I like better than puttering around in a garden."

"I'll mention it to him," said Archie.

"Maybe you'd like to see the plan I've made."

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"Not now, thanks."

Archie peered down at the black water some forty feet below. When he looked up, Marcus Drake was beside him. "Look," said Drake, "those straggling bushes are dying out. We ought to cull them out and plant new ones. I can't stand the sight of anything dead."

"I'll mention it to Craig," Archie repeated. He tried to walk away, but the bogus gardener followed along beside him.

"There should be a few catalpas sprinkled around, too. I've got a symmetrical arrangement worked out." Drake caught Archie's arm and started to lead him off to the right. "It will just take a minute or two to look at this plat."

"No, thanks, I'm busy."

"Hell, you can't be that busy."

Archie glanced at his watch. "I've got an appointment."

"What time?"

"Eleven. I'm five minutes late."

"Important people are always ten minutes late for appointments." Drake tightened his grip on Archie's arm. "The chart is just inside that door."

"Well—"

At that moment someone called to Archie from the office. He was wanted on the telephone. He broke away from Drake's hold and almost ran across the court.

To his surprise the call was not from Hamilton Craig. It was the low, drowsy voice of Philip Parker—Whiskey Phil. Now what could *he* want?

"I been thinkin' Burnette—" Whiskey Phil was considerably more intoxicated than when he had left an hour before—"you're a good guy, Archie Burnette. Why don't you come around to the tavern and have a drink on me? Maybe I got somethin' interesting to tell you."

CHAPTER XIV

Craig's Double Personality

BY THE time Archie reached the tavern it was too late.

"He's gone now," said Whiskey Phil. "There was a guy in here you should have seen. He and Mac and that other bum, what's his name—yeah, Krug—they was swappin' lies. And this guy was darn good."

Archie couldn't make anything out of this talk. He should have known better than to let this drunken sot lead him away from his work. And still there was something wise in Whiskey Phil's manner. He was making grotesque faces as he talked, drawing his circled eyes in an exaggerated wink.

"How was this stranger so good?" Archie asked.

"He was a great story-teller, my boy. He kept Mac and Krug in stitches for half an hour."

"Is there anything remarkable about that?"

"Awful funny to watch. Just like the snake I saw at the Zoo. Ever see that snake coil up and blow his neck and spring? That's the way this guy would tell a story. His neck would keep blowing all through the build-up. Then all of a sudden—snap—he come out with the point. He had those boys rolling on the floor."

Archie shrugged. He guessed he had better get back to work. But Whiskey Phil tapped him on the wrist.

"This guy—oh, come back some time and you'll get to see him. All right, run out on me. You can't 'preciate a nice dirty place like this. You and Craig have got to go tearing up all this low-down block makin' it over for respectable people. That's a devil of a way to do. Next thing you know you'll be lighting that inner court up with

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spots and invitin' the public in for softball or somethin'."

"What gave you that idea?"

"Well, if you do, here's the man that'll fix you up with flood lights."

Whiskey Phil began to scribble on a piece of paper. "His name's Ben Dodge. Now how the hell do you spell it?"

"I think you've got something there, Parker." Archie placed a hand on the drunken man's shoulder.

Archie walked back to the office thoughtfully. Benjamin Dodge was the electrician who had inspected the wiring a few days earlier. It was odd that this dissipated man at the bar should know about him. But apparently he knew a great deal.

Flood lights over the court—that would be the very trick to put an end to these bad dreams.

"Now, why didn't I think of that?" Archie said to himself.

Entering Craig's private office, he called the downtown studio.

"Hello, Mr. Craig. I've got to see you right away—huh?"

"This isn't Craig," came the sharp-edged voice. "He's out. Any message?"

Archie hesitated. He would have sworn that the first "hello" was Craig's enunciation. But this raw twang was not familiar.

"This is Archie Burnette at the Southwest Boulevard Apartments. I'm going to spend some of Craig's money and I wanted to warn him. When will he be back?"

"Couldn't say. When he left he spoke of taking the day off. Do me a favor, will you?"

"What is it?"

"He's had a few business calls here at his studio," said the voice. "If he should drop in out there, have him phone me at once; will you?"

Archie promised and hung up.

Without further ado he took action on Whiskey Phil's ingenious suggestion. He called Benjamin Dodge and ordered a battery of flood lights for the court.

The lights would be expensive and Hamilton Craig might not approve. "But he can't do any worse than fire me," Archie said to himself. "And he can't any more fire me than he can evict Dr. Silverhead. I'm too near the inside track."

HIS next thought was to urge the tenants to make use of the lighted court in every way possible. Lawn chairs, a drinking fountain, card tables—perhaps even a croquet ground—such improvements would lift this ground right out of the enemy's hands, and there could be no more of these ugly dreams.

But Archie was destined to crash into the immovable Marcus M. Drake long before any of these various improvements could be effected.

"You're scheming something," Hetty said to Archie, lunching with him that noon. "I wish you'd keep me posted on what's happening. I do want to trust you, Archie."

"You've got to trust me, Hetty. I'm plunging on my own now. Things are happening too fast for me to wait on Craig. Besides he's always in a fog."

"What do you mean by that?"

"If I talk with him here he never remembers what he last told me at the studio. If I talk with him down there I have to repeat to him what he's said here before he can get his bearings and talk with me."

"That's strange. He *must* be a good business man."

"I can't figure him out."

Hetty looked up suddenly. "I just thought of something. I'll bet Craig is a sick man."

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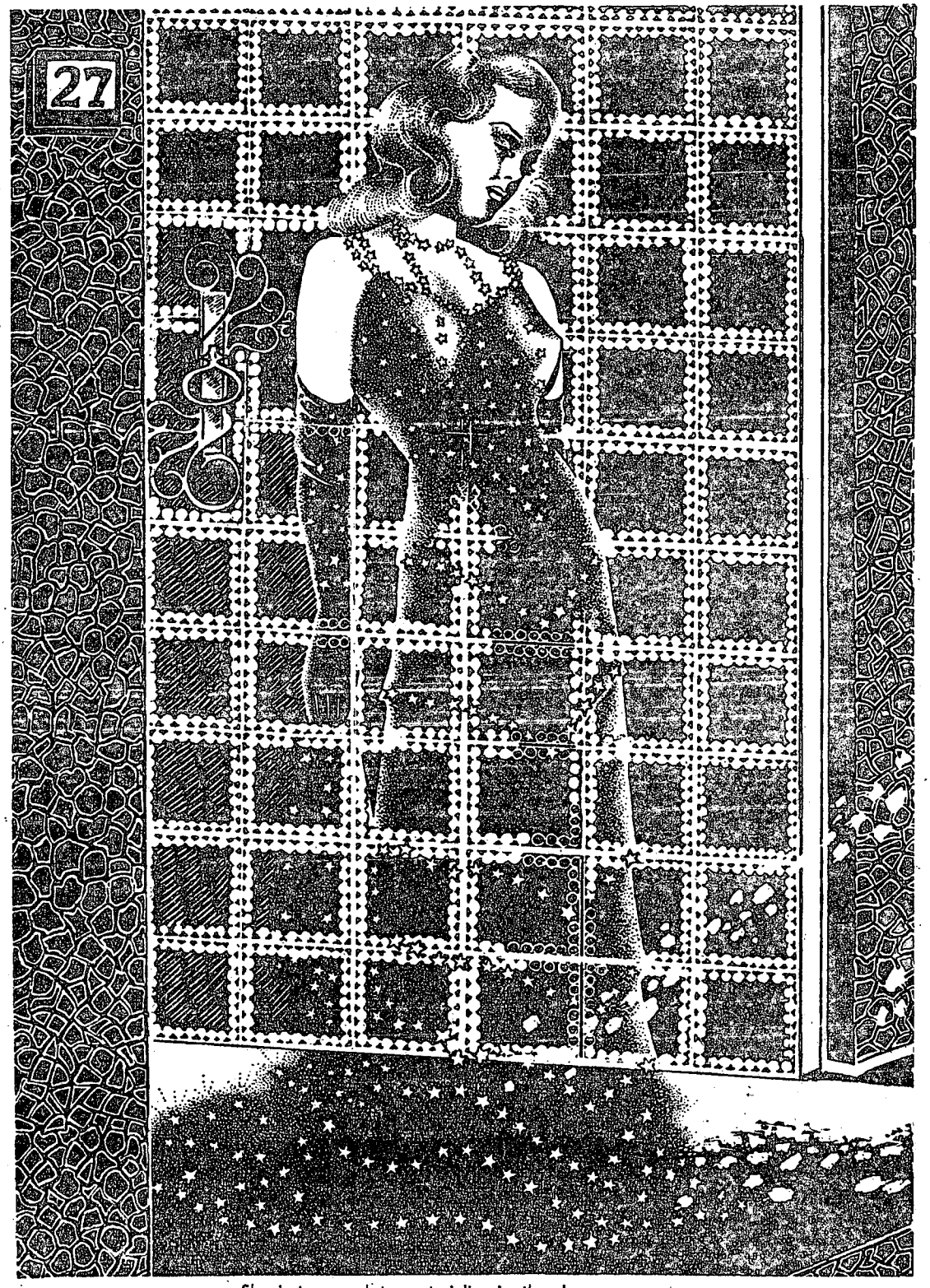

She just seemed to materialize in the doorway

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"Sick? Not that I know of. Why?"

"Otherwise why would he let this awful Dr. Silverhead and Drake stay on? He must be depending on the doctor for something."

"There might be something in that," Archie mumbled. Indeed, there was something. Hetty was hitting closer to the truth than she guessed. But the doctor's invisible choke-hold on Hamilton Craig was not to be confided.

"Tell me," said Hetty, as her imagination raced along with this new hypothesis, "is Craig the same when he's downtown? Are there any differences in his personality, his pep, his habits or anything?"

"Come to think of it," said Archie cautiously, "he is a little different. He always seems more nervous here—chain-smoking and pacing the floor."

"Doesn't he pace the floor of his studio?"

"Not that I recall. He's usually very calm. He doesn't smoke. He's generally thumbing through the stub of a check-book."

"We're on the right track, Archie!" Hetty exclaimed jubilantly, and he had to make a face at her to remind her their talk was confidential. She went on in an intense whisper. "Here's his whole case in a nutshell. Every morning on the way to work he takes the doctor's medicine—vitamins or something—"

"How do you know?"

"I'm just guessing. But look: That makes him full of vim and vigor and business poise and everything, and all the troubles around here are trifling—"

"I wish I could believe that," Archie groaned.

"And he forgets them. But by evening the effect of the medicine has worn off and he lapses into his sick, worried self again—"

"And takes his troubles seriously. Your theory is very pretty, Hetty. But

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I'd a darn sight rather talk business with him here than down at the studio. If he's sick, I wish he'd stay sick long enough to do some house-cleaning around here."

"I wish I didn't keep changing back into a card," said Hetty wistfully. "I'd do some more spying. I'd find out how often he reports to Dr. Silverhead. That may be where the men were taking him last night."

"What men?"

"The same two that led him away the first night I was here—you know, the night watchmen—Mac and Krug. I just happened to see the three of them pass the foot of the stairs last night."

Archie got up from the table abruptly. He made a swift circuit of the reception room and Craig's private office and returned to the dining-room to Hetty.

"Nobody's located Craig yet," said Archie. "And until we find him we don't have a hint as to where that hot-tempered red-head has gone."

"Patsy? Is *she* gone?"

"Hasn't been seen since last night. She was last seen talking with Craig. When the two men led him out you didn't see her, did you, Hetty?"

The girl shook her head. "N—no. That is—wait a minute. It does seem to me that Craig was sticking a white card in his coat pocket."

CHAPTER XV

Three in a Tunnel

THIS tunnel was as black as death. Archie groped along on his hands and knees. Again he snapped the flashlight on for a quick glimpse of the dusty walls and ceiling.

It was amazing that there were no tracks through this underground passage.

Now he proceeded through the pitch-blackness, taking care not to brush against the walls. But when he coughed from the dust he felt certain that no one heard him. This trail evidently led away from the haunts of Marcus Drake and the doctor. The entrance from the basement storeroom had been well concealed.

Perhaps this underground passage had been a hiding-place during some war in the past. Archie had not come upon it quite by accident. He had been searching for the past three hours for Hamilton Craig. The absence of tracks convinced him that he had lost the trail.

Could he be sure that Hamilton Craig *was* a prisoner of Drake and his henchmen?

That hint had come to him through Whiskey Phil. Archie marveled at how much he had gambled on the hunches of this drunken man. The suggestion of Craig's captivity had come shortly after lunch. This time Whiskey Phil had been seen staggering along the curb in front of the mansion, and one of the usherettes had suggesed he should be given the bum's rush down the street. Archie had gone after him. As he suspected, Whiskey Phil had some news.

" 'Snone of my bizhness," said Whiskey Phil, sitting down on the curb, "but looksh to me like they're bein' 'stravagant, fixin' up so much food on that tray. Mush be they've got 'n awful important prizhner to feed."

Whiskey Phil had grumbled on in this vein. He thought the prisoner might be a king or a senator—"or it could be some big-shot arch-iteck."

"There's someone else missing," Archie had confided. "One of the usherettes has been gone since last night. Maybe that tray of food—"

"Prob'ly some big-shot arch-iteck,"

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Whiskey Phil repeated. Then, as if he had done his good turn for the day, he gave Archie a farewell wave, tipped his hat to the lamp-post, and staggered away.

On the strength of that suggestion, Archie had spent the afternoon rambling through the central rooms of the old hospital. He had taken pains not to disturb Drake and the two henchmen in their afternoon council. As long as he had dared, he had listened in, undiscovered. They were plotting for their next victim.

That eavesdropping experience had been a revelation to Archie. He got the conflict that was rising between Drake and the two thugs . . . Mac and Krug were ready to move out. They were sure that things were getting much too hot around here for their health. But the egotistical Drake was so much intoxicated by his own cleverness that he thought he could stay on.

Drake's argument was that the doctor with his eccentricities and his mask of genius was the perfect shield.

"All we have to do is to keep pulling the wool over Craig's eyes," Drake insisted. "Tease him along, make him think that some million dollar investments are just around the corner. He'll keep right on playing ball."

"It's getting too crowded around here for me," said Mac Macklevitch.

"That's my sentiments," said Krug. "If a racket's good on Southwest Boulevard, it's good at the other end of town, too."

"I make a commotion that we start packing," said Macklevitch.

"When we move out," said Marcus Drake, "we won't bother to pack. The doc will never get fixed up in another nest like this in a long time. That's why we're squeezing this game to the last drop. All we have to pack is a half a ton of greenbacks when the game runs out. And we'll leave Doc Silverhead hanging to the goal post."

Mac and Krug had hinted that they could do with a few pounds of greenbacks most any time. They felt the need of a vacation in Florida.

DRAKE had silenced them with a gruff bark and reminded them that there was lots of business on the docket. At this point Archie had got a keyhole glimpse of Drake's demonstration with the pruning shears.

"One clean snip right over the Adam's apple." Drake had moved toward Mac to make his demonstration more realistic. Mac's eyes lowered to watch the pruning shears flash within a few inches of his throat, and he gave a sickly grin. Drake sat back in his chair, pocketed the shears, and lighted a cigarette. "It's a fine art, boys. Maybe you don't realize you're associating with a top-notch artist."

Krug shrugged uncomfortably. "We don't doubt your ability. But I'd just as soon see this guy Whitmore get his in the doctor's mill. He's stout and wiry, and he's got a neck like a bull calf."

Drake snorted with contempt. "Are you guys yellow? Maybe he hypnotized you with his funny stories."

Then the men had proceeded to talk about their prisoner. In an effort to catch their voices, Archie had made the mistake of touching his forehead to the door-knob. The click was followed by a tense silence. Archie slipped away as softly as he came and was out of sight before the door opened. From then on he had explored the doctor's laboratories. Somewhere there must be clues to the hiding-place of the prisoner.

The doctor had had a few interruptions in the course of the afternoon. When it was Drake who passed, or Mac or Krug, the scientist had gone on with

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his monologue uninterrupted.

But once when the pretty Southern usherette, Linda Lee, came that way on an errand, much to Archie's surprise the doctor paused to explain his work. He was busy grinding lenses. His scientific explanations evidently fascinated her.

This was not the first time that Archie had noted a curious attraction between these two. Perhaps Dr. Silverhead's appearance reminded Linda Lee of a venerable Southern colonel. Perhaps she was flattered by his talk that she could not possibly understand. At any rate, this was a rare quirk of the doctor's, that he should come down out of his mystic realm of science to take notice of a human being.

"Mah! It must be wondahful knowing all abaout these big machines," Linda Lee had said. "Sometime you-all must show me how they work."

If Dr. Silverhead knew anything about any prisoners concealed within this building, he did not mention it. He talked of nothing but lenses.

Down in one of the basement rooms Archie had found a few tracks in the dust of the planks that formed a walk around the heaps of old boxes. He had dared to call out in a cautious whisper, "Is anyone here? Is anyone here?"

It was when the voices and footsteps of Mac and Krug had descended upon him that Archie slipped into a remote storeroom. His flashlight had shown him the way back, further and further. Presently he had lost the voices, but he had discovered a ladder leading down into a pit in a dark corner of this room. He kept calling in a low voice, descending the ladder into the darkness. Not the faintest sound encouraged him to follow this trail, nor did his flashlight reveal any signs that this rickety old ladder had been used in recent days. It was only that this pit seemed a logical hiding-place.

The last few feet of descending depended upon a ten-foot rope, tied to the bottom rung of the ladder. Archie searched the bottom of the pit with his flashlight. It looked to be solid earth. But he took no chances. He searched his pockets for something to drop.

A gun, a book of cards, a pocket-knife—they were not possessions that he cared to drop in case that dirt floor should prove to be a surface of mud or artificial quicksand.

HE FASTENED the glowing flashlight to his pocket, pointing downward. Then he cautiously climbed down the rope. The light swung about, to reveal a turn of the trail, into a black tunnel leading off from the bottom of the pit.

This gave him more evidence the surface beneath him was probably solid. Nevertheless, when he had reached the knot at the lower end of the rope he hung there trying to touch his toes to the dirt floor beneath him.

Would it be safe to drop?

His question was at once answered. From high overhead came the groaning and crackling of wood. The hanging ladder suddenly gave way and came down, rope, Archie and all.

For a long moment the hollow pit resounded with the crashing of rotten timbers. Archie was quick enough with his flashlight to dodge the splintered section of ladder that came bounding like parallel spears. He rolled into the mouth of the tunnel for safety and hovered there until all was silent.

He threw his light upward through the pit. He was in one devil of a jam now, he thought. The long ladder had broken under its own weight. The longest remaining section extended about two-thirds of the way up to the surface.

It seemed a good time to Archie to

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divest himself of some profanity. He stomped around, calling himself names. He had had no business coming down here. There had not been one single clue to make him suspect Marcus Drake's prisoner would be hidden here.

It was the mystery of an unexplored passage that had led Archie Burnette into this trap. The mystery still eluded him. He could think of no use for such a place as this. But perhaps the tunnel held the answer. On hands and knees he crawled into the low, narrow passage. There was no way to guess how many scores of years ago this tunnel may have been dug. Obviously, it had not been used recently. Archie noted that the air was not stale or dank, as he might have expected in a dead-end passage. In fact, there was a draft of air circulating through. Dust from the furnace room had found its way down here. The spade marks in the clay walls were filled.

The tunnel kept circling, and Archie soon lost all sense of direction, not to mention distance.

Soon he was in a state of indecision. Was there any reason that he should go on? Perhaps the tunnel extended for miles, though this seemed unlikely, considering the freshness of the air.

Eventually he came to a passage so narrow that he could barely squeeze through on his hands and knees. His clothing seemed much too bulky. He was tempted to store his pocket things in his coat and leave them behind. But presently he made it through this narrows and had smooth sailing again.

He glanced at his watch. Perhaps he could gauge the length of this tunnel by the time required to traverse it. The watch said 6:15. It was earlier than he thought. No matter if he missed dinner; but he must be there to go back and see Craig by eight.

A little farther on he came to the tunnel's end. Abruptly it opened into another pit. His flashlight revealed a curved brick wall. It proved to be a cylindrical shaft about six feet in diameter.

It was the garden well.

TEN feet below the opening of the tunnel, into this brick-walled shaft was the surface of the water. Slowly Archie combed the walls with an upward spiral of the beam of light. About thirty feet above him was the stone railing, enclosing a patch of dark blue sky.

In Archie's excitement over his discovery, he overlooked the discrepancy between the darkened sky and the time indicated by his watch. At once his curiosity was bounding outward in all directions.

Why should there be a tunnel leading into this well? Could it be a crude means of piping water into the other pit?

What awful mysteries lay buried beneath the surface of that black water? Could Archie explore those mysteries?

Why had this tunnel opening not been visible from overhead?

The latter question was easily answered. The flash beam revealed a projecting ring of brick just above the mouth of the tunnel. That narrow ring must have been just sufficient to cut off the view from above.

A scheme was going through Archie's brain. Perhaps he would not get back to the office by eight. But Opportunity was knocking. He had better answer.

During the next hour he made the long trip back through the tunnel to the other pit. He returned with the rope and a hook which he had contrived to make out of a piece of wire with which the ladder had once been repaired.

With this crude equipment Archie went fishing in the well.

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He was working without his flashlight now. He needed to save what little battery there was left. He had reduced the searching process to a set of routine motions. He could hear the hook strike the water. A double arm's length of rope would let it down to the bottom. Then his arm would describe a wide circle and mark across it with slow crisscrossing motions.

The hook caught nothing. Archie could not understand it. Had that moonlight murder been only a dream after all?

Archie had not exhausted his resources. Now he considered a new course of action. If he could fasten the end of the rope securely, he might let himself down, dive into the water and make a thoroughgoing search.

Suddenly he was interrupted by the sound of a low, plaintive voice echoing through the tunnel. It was a girl's voice, a childish whimpering.

Archie groped with the flashlight, turning the sickly yellow beam back into the tunnel.

"Who is it? What are you doing down here?" His words melted together as they echoed through the passage. The girl's cry. . . . Archie recognized the voice of Grace. A moment later he found her. She was staring at the flashlight in utter terror. Archie turned the beam on himself.

"Don't be afraid. There's nothing to cry about. You're not hurt, are you?"

For a few moments the girl refused to talk. Archie found it difficult to soothe her. He kept repeating the same statements over and over.

"Book lost out of my pocket. But don't worry, I'll get you out of here in a few minutes."

When Grace began to get a grip on herself, her morality complex was quick to come to the fore. How could she ever explain a situation like this? What would people say if they knew that Archie had brought her down to this hidden passage?

Archie almost lost his temper. "Act your age. Is it my fault you came awake at a time like this?"

Then, as he picked up the address book, he was much relieved to find another card in it. He tossed the card into the air.

"Maybe this will stop your blubbering."

That card he knew was Hetty. A moment later she was with them in person, and Archie's bad humor vanished. There was something to a girl like Hetty—

"Well, what a cozy little threesome," she said smiling. "I don't know where we are or what this is all about, Archie, but lead on! We're with you!"

CHAPTER XVI

Two Camera Flashes

"MAYBE you two can figure an answer to this puzzle," said Archie. "I can't. I got in here by mistake. I was looking for someone and I lost the trail. Now we are 30 or 35 feet down in the earth. This tunnel leads into the side of the old well in the court. Here. I'll show you."

Archie beckoned to them with his flashlight. Hetty saw there was nothing to do but crawl along after him on her hands and knees. At first Grace would not go. The party stalled while she began her complaints.

"Sorry I can't furnish hiking outfits," said Archie. "You'll have to make the best of it."

"This is revolting," said Grace. "It is absolutely against my principles."

Archie wished there were some convenient way to put Grace back into the book. "Come along. I'll have two wit-

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nesses to what I have seen here."

"You had no right to bring me down here this time of night," Grace whined.

"It is always night in a tunnel," said Archie. "What difference does it make?"

Grace demanded to know what time it was. Archie glanced at his watch. The hands pointed to a quarter after six. That was no help. His watch had gone dead hours ago.

Grace declared she would go back alone. She started off in the darkness, after Archie assured her that that was the direction he had come from. He and Hetty crept on toward the wall.

"How many flash bulbs do you have?"

"Several," said Hetty. "I'll keep the camera ready. . . . Oh, so this is the garden well."

The hollow shafts echoed below wisps of sound from somewhere overhead. The rustle of leaves, the voices at a little distance. The weird blend was worth listening to, and Hetty was fascinated. Some persons were in the garden, but their conversation was indistinct.

Presently these sounds were drowned by the wail of Grace. Archie turned the flashlight around. The frightened girl was coming back, brushing the sides of the tunnel, heedless of her clothes.

"I thought she wouldn't go far alone," Hetty whispered, "but we'd better get her back right away."

"As soon as we get a picture or two," said Archie.

Grace did not bother to explain her sudden return, but she was in a troublesome mood. "You've got to take me back. You've no right to keep me down here."

"If you will just be patient—"

"Is that the garden well?" Grace's eyes lost some of their fright as an idea dawned. "Then it's easy. All we have to do is call. Someone will let a ladder down for us."

Without any hesitation Grace acted upon this inspiration. She started to cry out. Instantly Archie dropped his flashlight and cupped his hands over her mouth.

"No! That won't do. There's someone up there—"

Grace tried to fight out of his grip. She mumbled, "Keep your hands off me or I'll scream."

It took Hetty's tact to quiet her. "She doesn't understand, Archie. If it's dangerous for us to call to someone, then we won't call. All you have to do is explain. We're ready to help you."

Then the two girls sat quietly, waiting for Archie to make something of his mysterious caution.

"Take my word for it, those voices up there mean trouble. Listen to them. . . . One of them is Marcus Drake."

"Marcus Drake—" Hetty's tone conveyed a great deal.

THE name meant nothing to Grace. But at least she was ready to be impressed. As Archie talked he turned off the flashlight. The voices overhead were coming closer. Archie's narrative—the strange dream of a few nights before—came forth in slow, broken phrases. Through the spaces of silence he could hear the echoing voice of Marcus Drake, a fitting accompaniment to his story.

"I'd better not tell you the last of it," said Archie, "but I am convinced of this: Drake has been hurling his victims into this well. I'm sure of it. And yet I can't prove it. For an hour I have tried to fish a body out of that black water. It's only about 5 feet deep. But I couldn't find a thing."

"It must have been a dream," said Grace.

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"But I've seen Marcus Drake at work," said Hetty. "I'm ready to believe—"

The overhead voices were coming down in larger, more distinct tones. Marcus Drake's guest was telling a funny story.

By bending through the opening and resting his shoulders on the edge of the brick wall, Archie could look up at the dark sky and see silhouetted there within the circle the two black knobs which were the heads of Drake and his guest. Hetty wanted to see, too.

Perhaps the eagerness of a candid camera expert becomes great enough to outweigh even the instinct of self-preservation. Perhaps Hetty's habits functioned against her will. The camera clicked and flashed.

Archie never knew what he uttered. In that second of surprise he was not sure whether it was a camera or a gun. He only knew he must jerk Hetty back into the tunnel before she fell headlong into the well. This he did, wasting no tenderness in the action.

He jerked her back *before she could be struck by the falling body.*

At the very split second of the flash, it seemed, the overhead talk had been broken off by a choking, grating sound, as of blades cutting into cartilage. A body was falling.

"Get back!" Archie snapped. "Get back out of my way!"

He barely touched the flashlight switch. The brief glow showed him the location of the hook he had used. At the same time he saw the water splashing high. The body had struck like a crack of close thunder. And now the echoes of the splash were rolling away through the hollow spaces.

Archie gathered the rope in his left hand, caught the wire hook in his right.

This time he could not miss. He hadn't actually seen the murdered man fall, but he knew the body was there in the slushing water a few feet below him. Now there would be time—

Why did that water keep splashing?

"Hetty! The flash!"

Hetty obeyed the order in her own way. All Archie wanted was a flashlight beam to direct him as he threw the hook. What he got was another flash of the camera. What he saw almost paralyzed him.

The bottom of the well, it seemed, was suddenly rising. It was a wide metal disc with a beveled edge, and some system of levers was pushing it upward from the under side, like a piston in a cylinder. The water was spilling down on all sides of it. On its surface lay the immersed and bloody mass of clothes and flesh that was Marcus Drake's latest victim.

Even in the brief flash of the camera Archie saw that the false bottom of the well being thrust upward was turning on the vertical arm that supported it from the under side. It was turning to dump its load into the unknown depth of the shaft.

CHAPTER XVII

A Ghost in a Jam

ARCHIE lashed out with the hook and it caught. The falling weight threw him forward, but he flattened against the floor of the tunnel and held on for dear life. The prize was his and he pulled it in, hand over hand.

"The flashlight, Hetty. It's under my feet. Give me a light here, but don't turn it toward the well."

"What was it, Archie?" Hetty was gasping. "It looked like a dummy."

"A dummy with his throat cut. I've got him here. I'm dragging him in over the wall. Get back, Grace. Give me a light, Hetty. He's about to slip

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outa my hands . . . Wait, I'm okay now. Never mind the light."

Grace was sobbing now and Hetty tried to silence her. In the pitch darkness neither of the girls could quite realize what had happened. But things were clearing up for Archie.

He knew he had acted in the nick of time. He knew that this was not a well: it was a chute for disposing of murdered men. Undoubtedly the shaft led down to make contact with the deep storm-sewer that led to the lake.

"Quiet, you two. Listen. Drake's talking. He sounds worried. Those two flashes of light—"

"I know I shouldn't have taken those pictures," Hetty whispered. "He couldn't help seeing. He'll know we're down here."

"Shssh! . . . Hear that? He saw *red.*"

From the low mumblings of Marcus Drake, conferring with his two henchmen, Archie was not convinced that the murderer knew what had happened. Rather, it sounded as if this deadly act always gave Drake a momentary hallucination of "seeing red" —and this time he "saw fire once or twice."

"Not gettin' weak knees, are you, Boss?" came Mac's taunt.

"Weak knees, hell!" Drake growled bitterly. "It was that bad liquor I got at the tavern . . . Or it might have been something else, now that I think of it."

"Where you goin', Boss?"

"Never mind me. Get that garden hose into action and wash up the stains. And be sure you run plenty of water in the well . . . And don't let me hear any more blab about weak knees. I'd like to see you slit a throat! You'd get mixed up and cut your own."

All of these words might have been spoken in voices that were scarcely more than whispers. The cylindrical walls carried them perfectly. Again Grace began to whimper.

"Quiet!" Archie snapped. "Our lives aren't worth a nickel if they find out what we've got on them. But if they don't find out, we got the goods that'll hang 'em."

His talk only terrified Grace, and as her sobbing faded away into silence he knew that she was turning into a card.

"Are you still with me, Hetty?" he whispered. "I didn't mean to make you go through all this—"

"Don't mind me, Archie. You've got the goods on them. You're taking a long chance, but your nerves are getting tougher."

He understood. He hadn't forgotten that during their first eaves-dropping adventure he had acted boldly because of Hetty. Even now, as he dragged the murdered body a little farther back into the tunnel, it was her presence that made him conscious of his daring.

He found the flashlight and turned its sickly orange glow on the bloody, water-soaked form. He recognized the face of the man he had seen in the tavern a few days before. The muscular neck was bowed, half closing the gash in the windpipe. Archie's blood chilled at the sight. He turned the flashlight off, but kept thinking of Whiskey Phil's description: the fellow would thrust his head forward like a snake when he sprang the point of a funny story.

A FEW moments ago this fellow had been in the midst of a story. Just now the two men at the top of the well were mentioning that fact, and Mac was muttering disconsolately because Marcus Drake hadn't let the guy finish. "Damn it, we never will get the end of that story."

"We'd better get to work with that garden hose." Drake was irritable.

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"I never saw him act so worried before. He's so damned egotistical he thinks he's takin' no risk. Just because nobody'll ever find a body in this well—"

The voices faded out of hearing. Presently there were sounds of the hose stream shooting against the rock railing. Splashes of water came chasing down the walls. Soon the well was refilling.

"We'll have to wait right here, Hetty, until they — Hetty, are you here?"

"Sorry, Archie," came a low gasp. "That sight was too much . . . I'm passing out."

"Gee, I'm sorry. But I'll take care of you, Hetty. You know you mean everything—"

Archie broke off, a little surprised at what he was saying. He doubted whether she heard. By this time she had become a card, waiting to be packed away in his book. It was just as well. Getting out of this hole was going to be difficult enough for one. It would be much worse for three. He groped for the flashlight, intending to pick up the two cards and deposit them in his book.

He found only one card.

He combed the walls and floor looking for the other one.

He rolled the dead man over, thinking that a card might have slipped into the heap of wet clothing. The card wasn't to be found. In desperation he even searched the ceiling. No card.

However, he noticed something that had previously escaped him. There was a shelf overhead that might have been cut for the storage of tools. For the narrow space of three feet the ceiling of the tunnel was formed of three wide planks planted crosswise, and a narrow opening had been left in front of these to give access to the storage space above them.

The little overhead cavern proved to be empty. Archie shrugged and returned to the business of searching for the lost card.

Could it be that one of the girls had not reverted to the card form, but had retreated through the tunnel?

Archie acted on this hunch. He followed back toward the pit, studying the tracks carefully. By the time he reached the low ledge of stone that had given him the tight squeeze he was certain that no one but himself had passed this way.

At this point sounds filtered through from the pit where he had descended. Sounds of hammering. So Marcus Drake had suspected something! And now he was at the top of the pit, no doubt, mending the broken ladder.

That changed Archie's plans completely. No more patient waiting for the men to finish up and knock off for the night. It was high time for him to find a way out of here—for his own sake and the sake of the card he held in his hand.

He hurried back to the well. The hose was still spilling down the wall. The voices were droning on, recounting some of the stories that the latest victim had told. Presently Mac was again grumbling over Drake's failing to wait for the point of the last story.

Archie cupped his hands to his mouth. He called out in a weird, mournful voice:

"Come on down and I'll finish the story."

THE mumble of voices from overhead became quieted whispers. Mac was sure that call had been for him. Krug refused to believe his ears.

"It *couldn't* be. Dead men don't talk. Besides, he's gone on down by this time."

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Archie gave out with another low moan. "Listen to me, you two. I'll give you the finish of that story. And then I'll go away and leave you alone. But you've got to do me a favor."

"It's him!" Krug gasped. "He wants us to do something. He's still alive."

"It's him, all right, but he's dead," Mac declared. "You can tell it by his voice. He's comin' back to make trouble. I been afraid o' this all along."

The two men listened incredulously. Slowly the instructions carried up to them. They were to act quickly. They were to find a long ladder or, if necessary, two ladders together, and let them down into the well.

As Archie listened to the nervous reactions to his demands, his hopes rose and fell by turns. The men wanted to run, but they dared not. They wanted to report to Marcus Drake, but Archie gave them a ghostly warning to forestall that. He would stand for no delays, and if they wanted to be spared his haunting—

"We got you," said Mac. "Krug 'll get the ladders right away."

"And you," Archie called, "you stay where you are, Mac. I need your company."

Archie took this precaution for fear he would never recover his ghostly grip upon these two if they both got out of range of his voice at once.

In a few minutes the spliced ladders were dangling down the inside of the wall. Archie could hear the two men immediately descending.

His plan was simple. He had dragged the body of the murdered man several feet into the tunnel, so that the curving walls hid it from the opening into the well. That would enable him to hide on the shelf while the men followed the tunnel beyond him. When they came upon the body, he would have a clear path to the ladders.

He barely had time to ascend the shelf, which was well concealed from their direction. He called to them once more. "Come back this way. I'm waiting for you in the tunnel."

Now he could hear them struggling to cross from the end of the ladder into the tunnel opening. Bright rays of a flashlight swept the floor beneath him. Presently they came, trailing along on hands and knees, Mac with a flashlight, Krug with a pistol.

"Damndest thing I ever heard of," Krug whispered.

"It just goes to show you," said Mac, "that Drake should've let him finish that story. His ghost can't rest easy till he gets it told."

"Drake don't know everything," Krug muttered. "We sure as hell won't tell 'im about this."

"Listen!" Mac stopped short. "Thought I heard someone stompin' around."

The two men proceeded cautiously. They were ten feet beyond Archie now. A little farther and it would be safe—

But they came to a dead stop. From their station they could undoubtedly see the figure of the murdered man in their path. Mac turned the flashlight back and forth along the walls. He spoke in a voice that was choked with fear.

"Well, here we are."

The walls gave back no answer, and Mac and Krug exchanged uncertain glances.

"I dunno 'bout this," said Krug. "I can't figure out how he got back here—unless Drake didn't do a good job of it."

"He looks awful dead," Mac whispered. Then he raised his voice in another effort to connect with the spirit. "Are you here? Where'd you go?"

"Ssssh! I *did* hear somethin'. Someone's comin' through the tunnel."

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ARCHIE'S chance had never come. Now he was on the verge of making a dash, but just as he started to climb down from the shelf the two men began backing down the path toward him. He hovered at the edge of the plank and held his breath. "Cover your light," Krug was saying.

Then Archie saw that another faint glow was approaching. The two men were paralyzed with the uncertainty of their situation. Would the approaching ghost carry a light? Of course not. They wanted to retreat, but they were afraid of disobeying that voice.

The approaching light burst full in their faces and the gutteral voice of Marcus Drake barked at them.

"Why, you damned dirty double-crossers!"

CHAPTER XVIII

Elevator Going Down

MARCUS M. DRAKE was almost too mad too speak. Archie would not have been the least bit surprised if he had opened fire with his brand new pistol, if only to kick up some dust at his henchmen's heels.

Like a pair of punctured balloons those two unworthies began to sputter and puff and cough. Together they succeeded in putting across exactly nothing. Their stammerings about ghosts and voices glanced off their steel-tempered boss like drops of water off a brick wall.

"Dirty double-crossers," was about all that Drake could utter. He was appalled to think that such inferior thugs would dare to sidetrack one of his carefully dispatched victims. There could be only one reason for their doing such a thing, he decided. They meant to give him the works and run out on him.

"Honest, boss, we never dreamed of such a thing. Shoot us dead if you want to, but I swear to high heaven—" Krug was begging for mercy.

"You got us all wrong," Mac couldn't hold the flashlight still, and his free hand was pressing against his sagging jaw. "He ain't dead, boss. He was *callin'* to us. He made us come down, honest."

Marcus Drake kicked at the corpse. "He's as dead as your dead brains. How'd he get into this tunnel? Not by himself."

"He called us in here. That's where we found him."

"You're talking like idiots," Drake snarled. "Who's down here besides you?"

"I dunno," said Krug. "We only got this far when we heard you comin' toward us. Is there someone else down here? We never passed no one. Did you?"

Drake disliked being thrown on the defensive, and he checked his impulse to glance back over his trail. "If there's anybody working with you hams, he's on your side of the body, not mine. I've just cleared the tunnel, and nobody got by me."

"We came down through the well," said Mac weakly. "Nobody got by us."

"I think I got it figured out," said Krug. "Someone on top musta threw his voice down the well."

"Very likely," said Drake sarcastically. "And it scared the corpse into jumpin' into the tunnel. That smooths out everything, don't it? Except why the hell the body didn't shoot-the-shoots on down to the storm sewer. Explain that, can you? I know damn well I pressed the button, and I heard the water carry off."

"You can't blame us for that trouble, boss. We was up here with you then. You admit that, don't you? Remem-

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ber, you walked off— Hey, what gave you the idea of comin' down here?" Mac saw he was on the trail of something now, and his voice stiffened into accusation. "By George, you musta knew you'd slipped off with your shears. You came down to check up."

Krug followed through. "Then he *was* alive."

"He was dead," Drake snapped.

"Then he's still hauntin' us," said Mac, shrinking back from the body.

Marcus Drake muttered uneasily to himself, and when Mac asked him what he'd said he refused to repeat it. Instead, he gave his thugs their orders. "Drag him to the well. I'll take your flashlight. There, move him along."

As the party passed beneath Archie, Drake missed bumping his head on the planks by a fraction of an inch. Another moment and one of these three was sure to recall this place of hiding. Archie made ready to slip down. He didn't straighten his clothes, though he felt sure that the rope and hook lumped between his ribs and the shelf were tangled up with his coat.

Darkness was in his favor for the moment. It was all a matter of timing. With the splash of the body into the well Archie bounded down and raced through the tunnel toward the pit. On hands and knees he ran, his shoulder brushing the walls to guide him.

ALREADY the light had turned, and its dim glow seeped around the curve. Then Archie was ahead of it, into the welcome blackness again. But the rumbling of voices had suddenly gone quiet, and Archie knew the men were listening. His thudding hands and knees had made too much noise. He cut his speed, slipped along as noiselessly as he could.

This sharp curve he remembered. Just ahead he would run into the narrow passage under the low ceiling of rock. If he could get through it undiscovered—

"Who's there?" Drake's voice rolled through the tunnel like thunder. "Who's there?" The storm was coming closer. So was the light.

Archie turned and backed into the narrows. If they crowded down on him he would be facing the right direction. The pistol with the corrugated handle was in his hand.

He fought his way backward. But he wouldn't make it. They were just around that sharp bend now.

"Who's there?" came the challenging snarl.

Archie gave back in a voice that would have chilled the gods of death. "I'm looking—for—Marcus—Drake!"

"What the devil is that?"

"I—passed—over—him—once—but—this—time—I'll—get—him."

"Like hell you'll get me!" Drake sneered. Archie could see his shadow forging ahead of the flashlight. He must have been on his knees and one hand; the shadow of his gun arm moved steadily along the wall. The gun came in sight at the turn, its short barrel glistening. There it stopped.

Archie held his breath and waited. He could hear Drake whispering to his men to come closer. The party fell silent as if waiting for another call from the unknown voice. Archie wouldn't give them the satisfaction. Another step and they would discover him. Then gunfire would do the bidding of Fate.

The shadow moved. The gunhand became an arm and shoulder, the broad cheekbone and narrowed eye and bulldog jaw of Marcus Drake. His twisted lips whispered something. Archie thought he was calling for more light.

Archie's fingered tightened. He was about to shout something, but Drake

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hadn't seen him yet. And then, suddenly, a strange something happened that turned Drake's head.

A voice called, "Whoo-oo-oo-ooo . . . where are you?"

It might have come from the well. At least from somewhere back in the curved passage that Marcus Drake and his party had just covered.

"There," came Krug's low voice. "I told you so."

"It came from this way before," Drake growled.

"Now maybe you'll believe us," said Mac. "The damned thing has gone over us."

"Sounded to me like a female; maybe spirits sound that way when they're in pain."

"It's a trick," said Drake. "Come on. Ten to one we'll find someone crawlin' the ladder."

The three men turned back. Archie followed them. It made no difference now that he had a clear course for an escape. His responsibility was plain. That voice was the girl he had lost—he wasn't sure which one.

Or was it? His hand plunged to his coat pocket. The book was hanging like a flap. What had caused that? The leap from the shelf? He had been in a tangle with the rope and hook. The one card must have spilled out and come to life.

He synchronized his creeping steps with the thud of Mac's hands and knees, and kept barely in sight of the retreating figures. Another call from the girl had urged them on. The round echoes of her voice left Archie still uncertain which girl. But the fact that she was calling—not sobbing or shrieking in terror—led him to believe it must be Hetty.

"By George, it is a female," he heard Drake declare. "And a damned good-looker. Am I seeing things? . . . Hello, there. What the devil are *you* doing down here?"

ARCHIE couldn't see her. Evidently Drake and the others could. But not for long. Archie heard her utter a little cry of astonishment. That was all. Then there was only the baffled gasping of Mac and Krug and the dumbfounded growl of Marcus Drake.

"Where's she going? Keep your light steady there. She's trying to get away."

"She's turnin' invisible," Krug said in an awe-stricken voice.

"It's a trick!" Marcus Drake snapped, as if that assertion made him the master of the situation.

It was a trick, all right. Archie had suspected, from his conversations with Hamilton Craig, that this miracle of science was one of the secrets that Dr. Silverhead had never shared with anyone else. Now Archie could see with his own eyes how completely mystified were these onlookers.

The girl must have completely disappeared before their eyes. Marcus Drake felt impelled to explain what had happened. His two satellites must be convinced this was no spirit, but only a trick.

"She's covered herself in some invisible wrap. No, don't shoot. Keep close against the walls so she can't slip through you. She'll make a break for the ladder in the well."

"Which way do we go, Boss?"

"Right up after her. She'll not get far with this."

Archie took the precaution to hold back while the three men crossed from the mouth of the tunnel onto the hanging ladder. None of them stopped to notice the white card that had fallen into the dust.

Archie stored the card in the leather book and carefully pinned it in his pocket.

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Again he shot a hasty glance around the premises, but the second card was not to be found.

His recent pursuers were still ascending when the daring inspiration struck him. He would still rescue that body. What could more certainly baffle and convict them?

No time to waste fishing from the surface with a rope and hook. With supreme determination he let himself down over the brick wall into the chilly water. The descent was made with almost complete silence.

Low splashes accompanied his attempt to locate the submerged form with his feet. From high overhead came someone's savage assertion that that damned spirit had by-passed them again.

Drake retorted that they'd shine a light down as soon as they made the rail.

Which meant that Archie had seconds to go. He located the limp form, locked his arms under the chest, and drew the weight up through the surface of the water.

Then it happened—swiftly, inescapably.

The bottom of the well thrust upward, hurling Archie off his balance. It tipped to one side. The water became a waterfall. And Archie and the body of the murdered man plummeted down into a pitch-black oblivion.

CHAPTER XIX

The Craigettes Carry On

BY THE following evening the affairs at the mansion were becoming badly disorganized. For the first day and a half three Craigettes had been carrying on without any supervision. Hamilton Craig had not been seen. Moreover, his lieutenant, Archie Burnette, had mysteriously disappeared.

To make matters worse, three of the six usherettes could not be accounted for. Perhaps they were in Archie's book, perhaps they were lost; or—and this was a matter of much speculation and worry—perhaps they were out on conquests of their own.

From their first entrance through these doors Cornelia and Genevieve had sensed a personal jealousy over Hamilton Craig. The passing days had intensified these feelings. And now, when the girls should have been concerned over the personal safety of their missing companions, they were in reality disturbed by this jealous fire. Were Patsy and Grace and Hetty in the company of Hamilton Craig; or were they with Archie, whose word carried such weight with the bachelor architect?

Cornelia, Genevieve and Linda Lee did not openly quarrel about this problem, but each had set about strengthening her own campaign of conquest.

If Craig should come back tonight or tomorrow, he would discover some pronounced personality changes.

Cornelia was following her hunch that what this wealthy architeet needed was a wife with a strong instinct for business. During the absence of her superiors she had taken personal command. She had declared the Craigette uniforms *passe* and had donned a tailored business suit, which gave her the air of a woman executive. She monopolized the reception desk, determined to run up a record of rental contracts before Craig's return.

However, Cornelia's high pressure tactics had worked adversely, and by this evening she could not deny that business was bad.

Cornelia was checking over the books when Genevieve came down. Genevieve was wearing pink. She might have been dressed for a party—a long

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flowing pink gown, a pink rose in her hair, pink slippers.

The lounge-lizards, Verrazzano and Whiskey Phil, eyed her with approval as she crossed to Cornelia's desk.

Cornelia's eyes flashed jealous fire. "I suppose you think that should be the new Craigette uniform."

"I'm going out with Mr. Dodge," said Genevieve haughtily. "Anything to kill the evening. Business is so dull around here." Her eyes lingered a little too long on Cornelia's bookkeeping figures. But she tossed her head in the air and started off as if business matters were beneath her contempt. Cornelia called her back.

"Your w e e k l y check. And you needn't stare at it. You see—" Cornelia jotted some figures with a pencil —"I have made a slight deduction for the Craigette Protection Fund. You haven't heard of it? It is my own invention. Each girl will contribute. The fund will be useful when we land bigger contracts and tour the country with a show."

"And who takes care of the money?" Business matters were no longer beneath Genevieve's contempt.

"Leave that to me. I'll invest it—and not in pink slippers."

The brickbats were beginning to fly when Benjamin Dodge arrived, breaking up the quarrel. Genevieve was glad enough to be rescued even though she made it plain to her escort that she was really much too aristocratic to be associating with him.

A FEW minutes later a young bond salesman came to call on Cornelia, and Carlo Verrazzano threatened to walk out in a huff. He began to howl like an injured puppy. "So long have I waited for the beeoootiful Cornelia!"

Cornelia had her own strategy. She called her two gentlemen friends into conference, she added Whiskey Phil to the circle and conferred with the three of them. The Craigette Protection Fund must be used to insure the welfare of the six usherettes.

"Body guards will be needed," said Cornelia, "brave, strong, fearless men. Men who will be ready to answer any emergency call."

The bond s a l e s m a n frowned and picked up his brief-case. He guessed he would not be available. Furthermore, he suspected that these girls were quite capable of taking care of themselves.

"Three of them have disappeared," said Cornelia.

"Then I suggest you call the police," said the bond salesman, "unless these two gentlemen are the brave strong bodyguards you are looking for. Good evening."

The door slammed and Cornelia was left with her two doubtful applicants. She decided to adjourn the conference. She had work to do. Whiskey Phil took the hint and floated off toward the nearest bar. Verrazzano rolled his eyes and began cooing about a moon that was due to rise in another hour or two. Cornelia fired him out of the house.

It might have been a peaceful evening for Cornelia if she could have spent it filling a scratch-pad with dollar signs and figures with lots of zeros. But presently Linda Lee intruded upon her solitude.

"Don't tell me," said Cornelia, "that you've been over at the doctor's laboratory again."

"Isn't he the most fascinatin' puhson?" said Linda. "He talks in such big words, and I can't undahstand a thing he says. He's really mahvelous."

Cornelia shrugged. She had little in common with this giddy Southern girl who knew nothing at all about business.

But tonight, to Cornelia's surprise, Linda Lee dropped a remark that had

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the right ring to it. "If the doctor's invention was successful it would make a fortune for someone." For whom? Linda Lee did not know. Why didn't she ask? Because the doctor never answered her questions anyway. He just went on talking.

"How big a fortune?"

"Oh, a few millions, Ah guess," Linda Lee answered carelessly. "Where is everybody, Cornelia? Isn't there any excitement around?"

"Plenty of excitement," said Cornelia, "if you have the wits to see it. Where did you leave the doctor? Come on, you're taking me over to see him."

Linda Lee led the way through the mansion. She didn't think the doctor would be very sociable, since he was still busy grinding a lens. But if Cornelia insisted—

Cornelia stopped and caught Linda Lee by the arm. Someone was coming up the rear of the walk, *limping*.

Into the light of the rear porch came Patsy. She clutched the rail of the steps for support. Her Oriental costume was bedraggled, her red hair in disarray, her wrist was bleeding. But as always, her eyes glowed with belligerence.

"Mah goodness!" Linda Lee gasped. "Did you-all get hit by a freight train?"

"I fell — damn it!" said Patsy. "Where's Craig? Has he come back?"

"He's been missing for two days," said Cornelia, helping Patsy to a chair. "Where on earth have you been? Where did you fall from?"

"That," said Patsy, "I wouldn't know. I was a card when I started falling, but I was *me* when I landed."

CHAPTER XX

The Man with the Beard

THE clerk in the novelty store on Fourteenth Street scrutinized his masterpiece with satisfaction.

"There, you see. No false face was necessary, sir. Your best friends won't know you now. I have changed the shape of your mustache, I've added spectacles, a goatee and triangular eyebrows."

The subject appraised himself in a mirror. "A very good job. Of course my tallness—but I can't expect you to change that."

"As long as you wear that coat, sir, the padding alters your build. Now if your walk doesn't give you away, I'm sure you are perfectly disguised."

The customer stroked his goatee, as though already fond of it. He paid his bill and walked out with a confident step.

BY THE time Patsy had acquired three or four bandages she decided to come to life and tell what had happened. Linda Lee was massaging her injured ankle, Cornelia was trying to make her keep the thermometer in her mouth. And Genevieve, recently returned from an evening with Benjamin Dodge, stopped by, trying to remain aloof.

"Don't you dare call the police," said Patsy for the fifth time. "Hamilton told me there might be some trouble, but it's his own private fight."

"She calls him Hamilton," said Grace.

"Here's how it happened." Patsy took a deep breath. "We were going to take in the midnight revue, Hamilton and I. As we were going down the walk to his car, those two night watchmen fell in with us. One of them said, 'Give us a ride down the street, pal,'—but Hamilton said, 'Nothing doing.' They were supposed to be on duty here. So one of them, the tall one with the crooked nose, started cussing for no reason at all. He said, 'If you won't take us riding, we'll take youse for one.'

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The next thing I knew they were fighting. The tall guy tried to pull a gun, and then Ham knocked it out of his hand."

"She calls him Ham," said Genevieve.

"When it comes to a good fight," Patsy continued, "I always forget to faint the way a lady is supposed to. They thought I was running away, but I wasn't. I was heading for the pile of bricks the builders had left by the walk. My bare fists are not much good, and when I slipped a brick off that tall bird's head, he figured I was worth a left to the jaw. Next thing I knew I was turning into thin air, hoping Hamilton would remember to pick me up, though I knew the chances were two to one they would K.O. him."

"Mah goodness!" said Linda Lee. "That's a lot of fighting ovah a cah ride."

"Don't be stupid," said Cornelia. "There's some feud that we don't know about. We've got to keep this out of the papers. Business is bad enough."

"I woke up just once during these last forty-eight hours," Patsy went on. "What I found made me so fighting mad that I turned right back into a card. Ham was beside me, bound and gagged. We were in an empty room, somewhere high up. He had rescued me from the fight, all right, and I imagine he had worked a long time to get me out of his pocket."

"So you came to life and untied him?" Cornelia asked.

"I came to life and should have untied him, but I was such a chicken-livered weakling—it makes me furious to think of it—of all the luck!. Just as I started to work on the ropes, we heard the two thugs coming up the stairs. Hamilton told me to hide, but darn it—I passed into thin air again."

"I don't blame you," said Linda Lee.

"The next thing I knew I was floating down past the hospital wall, coming back to myself. I landed with an awful bounce on this ankle, and here I am."

"And where," asked Genevieve, "is our Hamilton?"

"That's what I'm going to find out," said Patsy, her lips tightening. "He's probably in one of the third floor rooms behind a locked door."

Obviously the thing to do was to rescue Hamilton Craig.

Patsy was ready, willing and almost able. She tried her weight on her bandaged ankle and said, "That'll do. All I need is a reliable weapon. Are you girls with me?"

"I've just contributed to a protective agency," said Genevieve. "Personally I don't care for brawls. Cornelia may have my share."

"Down where I come from," said Linda Lee, "the men folks are always glad to do the fighting."

Patsy turned to Cornelia as her one hope in this emergency. Cornelia feigned a willingness to attack the problem vigorously. She believed everything should be talked over thoroughly, however, before plunging. It would be well to find out where the night watchmen were spending the evening, before invading their territory. And what about those lights that would go on automatically whenever a person passed from one room to another? And what about a choice of witnesses in case this action should come up in court?

THE more Cornelia talked the angrier Patsy became. "I don't give a darn about your ifs and ands and whereases. Our job is to find Hamilton Craig and cut those ropes. Are you with me or aren't you?"

The telephone rang in Craig's office. Genevieve was glad of the chance to escape.

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"Are you with me, Cornelia?" Patsy shot her challenge squarely.

"I'm with you, but I'm not going to lose my temper about it. You're too h o t-h e a d e d, Patsy. If you hadn't started throwing bricks—"

"Oh, so it's all *my* fault. *I'm* the one who tied him into knots. I could use a few bricks right now."

Cornelia tried to calm her. "Linda Lee is right: we need some men to help us. I have just been talking with Carlo Verrazzano and—"

"Verrazzano!"

Patsy did begin throwing things. All of Cornelia's p r e c i o u s bookkeeping ledgers began to fly.

It was Genevieve's telephone conversation that brought a hush over the group. The call evidently came from Hamilton Craig's office—at this time of night! Someone was coming out to investigate Craig's strange absence. He should arrive in a few minutes.

"There," said Cornelia, "I told you we should not be too hasty."

It was precisely midnight when the doorbell rang and the three girls found themselves face to face with a stranger of most striking appearance. Tall, heavy shouldered, most dignified in bearing, he did not look to be a man accustomed to dealing with situations of violence. But his eyes were keen and he was surprisingly young to be wearing a gray goatee.

He took two steps into the reception room, bowed impressively, and said, "I am very much concerned about Hamilton Craig. I am his best friend. In fact, I have known him all my life. I understand that he has not been seen for the past forty-eight hours. If any of you ladies can assist me—"

He paused, and his eyes were intent upon Patsy, who was waving at him with a bandaged wrist.

"I have just been elected," said Patsy. "Follow me!"

CHAPTER XXI

H.C. and Hamilton Craig

PATSY was temporarily on her good behavior. She felt constrained to keep her temper under control in the presence of this tall man who reminded her so much of Hamilton Craig. She felt somewhat restored as a result of first-aid treatment and a cup of hot tea. It was good to be in fresh, comfortable clothes again. Linda Lee had loaned her a starchy white slack suit which went well with her red hair. The tall man's approving glances told her so.

He was older than Hamilton Craig by ten or fifteen years, she guessed, but he had the same energetic manner, curiously tinged with shyness.

It was evident that he knew much about Hamilton Craig. Such secret knowledge, as where to turn a switch to cut off the lights that would otherwise pop on automatically when anyone walked through these rooms, had been shared with him. Patsy expressed her surprise at this. The tall man did not hesitate to reveal these confidences.

"Craig meant this lighting device to control the comings and goings of a lot of scoundrels who have been nesting in these old empty buildings. But from the way things have gone, the trick wasn't very successful."

"Maybe Mr. Craig hired the wrong men as night watchmen," Patsy suggested.

"Do you think so?"

"Aren't they the same scoundrels you were talking about, Mr.—?"

"Just call me H.C.," said the tall man. "Those are my initials."

The surprising thing was that they were the initials of Hamilton Craig. Patsy mentioned this.

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"We are related," H.C. said lightly. "Those initials run in the family."

Patsy accepted the explanation. It helped her understand the similarities between these two men—the expression of the eyes, the manner of walking, even the tone of the voice.

They ascended to the second floor, passed through a wing of newly decorated apartments, came to a stop near the middle of the building, where the plasterers' equipment blocked the stairs. Patsy was almost certain the prisoner was in a third floor room.

To her surprise H. C. picked her up and lifted her over the barricade of plasterers' supplies, and set her down on the third step.

"So we won't leave any white tracks on the stairs," he explained

They reached the top step. He drew her arm through his and they started down the line of rooms.

"I don't think Mr. Craig is interested in any girls," said Patsy. "And I don't blame him, the way all of us sit around talking about him."

"Oh, they do? What do they say?"

"What they say makes no difference to me," said Patsy.

At the end of the corridor they turned back. They had glanced into each room not already occupied by tenants.

"I must be wrong," Patsy said. "But I remember distinctly it was an empty room, with yellow walls and a crack in the plaster that looked like a falling palm tree. And there was one window.

"Facing the court or the street?"

"The court, I think. I was too mad to see straight. You see I had just waked up when we heard the men coming up the stairs."

"Then the room must be near a stairway."

H. C. led her back to the center of the building.

"We didn't try this room," said H. C., scrutinizing an obstructed doorway. "I'll move a few of these window frames and we'll see what's back here."

Patsy gave him a mocking smile. She thought he was being very impractical, and her patience and good behavior were wearing thin.

WHEREVER Hamilton Craig might be imprisoned, she felt sure it wouldn't be behind a doorway that was blocked by half a ton of floor lumber and a couple dozen window frames. If she knew those two night watchmen, they weren't the sort to relish work. And yet she was certain that they were obliged to drop in on their prisoner often enough to keep him from starving.

"Sap," she said.

H. C. apparently didn't like being called a sap by comparative strangers. But upon weighing her argument he decided to move no more window frames. He stepped down off the bundles of quarter-sawed oak.

However, the slight joggle of the whole stack of material fascinated him and he gazed back at it curiously.

"Are those frames bearing any weight against the wall or aren't they?" he asked, squinting at the shadows. "We'll answer that problem before we go on."

"Do you divide or multiply?" said Patsy, sarcastically.

"And what about those bundles being a quarter inch off the floor?"

"They must be hypnotized. Are you looking for Hamilton Craig or aren't you?"

H. C. didn't answer. He was down on his hands and knees trying to see underneath the stack of material. He slipped his fingertips under the corner and pulled. The stack of material rolled away from the door without so much as the quiver of a window frame.

"I thought so," he said, more to himself than to Patsy. "That whole ca-

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boodle of stuff is on casters. Well, this door should give us what we're looking for."

Patsy followed him into the wedge of space. He turned the knob and the door opened.

"We'll leave the room light off," he said. "There'll be enough gleam through these window frames. And we'd better pull them back in place while we're at it."

"Yellow walls," Patsy whispered, "with cracks like a falling tree. This must be the place."

H. C. called into the darkness.

"Are you there, Ham Craig? This is your—your friend, H. C. We've come to get you, Patsy and I. Where—oh, here you are. They've knotted you up a bit . . . Patsy, a little more light. No, not the switch. Just open the door a little wider. That's good. I'll have these ropes cut in a minute."

Patsy heard the relieved sigh of the prisoner. Once his gag was removed he was quick to come to life.

"Ah—whooie — that's better. I've been looking forward to this . . . The other arm first, if you don't mind. It's still got some feeling. The left one's numb . . . Is that Patsy with you, or am I seeing red?"

"It's me," said Patsy. "Nice little date we had. You sure threw me a swell party—like fun."

"You did the throwing," said Hamilton Craig, trying to loosen the rusty joints in his free arm. "The way you toss bricks you ought to have a job with a wrecking crew. You sure wrecked me."

"There you go again," Patsy said hotly. "I s'pose you're going to tell H. C. it was all my fault."

"You grazed me with that brick," said Craig, dragging to his feet, "just as I was bearing down on those fiends for a knockout—"

"Listen to him rave, H. C.," Patsy taunted. "Knockout? All right, my aim slipped and I spared 'em the trouble. We're lucky they didn't shoot us both."

"I don't deny that," said Craig, lifting a foot out of ropes. "All I'm saying is, when you got careless with that brick—"

"You'd better not talk," Patsy screeched. "A couple of hours ago you threw me out that window."

"How could I throw you out when my hands were tied?" Craig growled. "You think I haven't had plenty of trouble protecting you? Yesterday when you turned into a card and fell to the floor you practically signed your death warrant. If those suspicious guys had seen you they'd have thought you were an invisible message. They'd have torn you to bits. But I did some swift headwork. I rolled over and sat on you."

"Headwork," Patsy echoed. "I ought to slap you. How did you finally get me out the window?"

"Kicked you out—with both feet."

"A fine time of night you chose."

"I'd been trying all day. I knew you'd be half way down to earth before you started to gather weight, and you wouldn't any more than break a leg. But I did expect you to heave a couple of bricks through my window for a thank you."

"I didn't know which window," said Patsy. "Any more insults?"

CRAIG turned his conversation to the mysterious H. C. — a veritable double for the architect in height and voice and profile. H. C. was energetically massaging Craig's arms and shoulders. In the dim yellow light that filtered into the room it was not easy to distinguish these two men. If anything, H. C. was slower of speech, more reserved, less disturbed by this gangster

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business that was operating on these premises.

But H. C.'s attitude was far from one of complacency. If anything, he was more in a mood for decisive action than Hamilton Craig, whose overwrought emotions could be seen in his exaggeration of trifles.

H. C. suggested to him that he drop his quarrel with Patsy; that there would be a time to review the scrap with the two night watchmen before a judge.

But Hamilton Craig, for some reason that didn't make sense to Patsy, made another uncomplimentary remark about her brick-throwing ability and added injury to insult by warning H. C. that all these things should be considered carefully by any man contemplating matrimony.

Contemplating matrimony? What did that have to do with Patsy? In full fury she exploded.

Instead of turning to a card as any other Craigette would have done under this much stress, she stormed to the door like a cyclone. She thrust the stacked floor and window materials out of her way, dashed through, and gave the stuff a final push—such a vigorous one that the echoes of clattering window frames and lumber accompanied her all the way down the stairs.

She got back to the reception room several minutes ahead of Craig and H. C.—by chance just in time to answer a telephone call. Here it was one o'clock at night and some drunken dope was trying to locate Archie Burnette.

CHAPTER XXII

Early Morning Spree

WHISKEY PHIL hung up and turned to the bartender.

"'Stoo bad. Archie ain't in. Or if he was, zhey di'n't wanta call 'im. Nice guy, thish Archie. You know 'im?"

The bartender nodded. He'd seen the fellow around.

"Well, you oughta git better 'quainted, like I did," said Phil. "Let 'im sock ya in th' jaw once. Thash how I got t' know 'im. He shocked me inna jaw, jis' like thish."

Whiskey Phil threw a wide haymaker that unbalanced him and left him clinging to the bar at a forty-five degree angle. He crawled back onto the stool.

"I wuz gonna tell Archie all 'bout thish practical joke. Guess I'll write 'im a letter. 'Stoo good to keep. Will yah give it to Archie? . . . Don't get grabby . . . ain't got no letter wrote yet. Gimme a peesha paper, will yah? Thassha boy."

Whiskey Phil wrote painstakingly for the next thirty minutes, and then gave the bartender the letter and went on his way.

His way took him through the building into the court. He weaved in and out of the arcade. Each pillar he encountered with an attitude that it was a personal friend, and there would be a one-sided argument as to how he was to get past.

He stopped to mutter over the strangeness of the heap of electrical equipment which had been deposited on the walk preparatory to the lighting of this court. The rolls of wire failed to give him any back talk, and he was disappointed. He kicked at them, then he took from his pocket a pair of pruning shears.

He snapped the shears but could not succeed in catching the end of the wire. Everything was falling away from him. The pruning shears, however, gave him a secret delight. He was a practical joker, the most amusing person in the world. He staggered down the walk snapping the shears. When he came to

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the door which led to Marcus Drake's basement he drew up with a deeply satisfied "Aha! Thish ish the playsh!"

The door was locked. This was annoying. Whiskey Phil tried several windows. But it was the door to Dr. Silverhead's laboratory that admitted him. The lights were friendly and inviting, and for a moment he was almost swerved from his purpose.

The pruning shears were still snapping in his hands, and so he plodded through a dark room grumbling mildly as he bumped into sharp objects and at last located the basement stairs that led to Marcus Drake's garden tools.

"Here she ish, hangin' on thish nail. All r-right, Mishter Drake, we'll trade. You c'n have thish one—I'll take yours for a shooveneer."

Suiting the action to the word, Philip Parker stumbled away, patting the new prize with the palm of his hand.

Half way through the dark room he stopped to look back and laugh. He laughed until he needed a drink. There was a bottle in his left hip pocket, but the bottle and the souvenir pruning shears were too much to handle at once. The bottle dropped and shattered.

"Sssssh! Don't be wakin' nobody up. Thish mus' be Mishter Drake's night to shleep."

The lights of Dr. Silverhead's laboratory again beckoned him, and he decided it would be a good time to drop in for a social call. Maybe he would find Archie. He still wanted to tell Archie his little joke.

Dr. Silverhead was seated at a table peering into a microscope. He glanced up at the intruder without actually seeing him, and returned his eyes to his work. He was operating a wooden wheel as large as an automobile steering wheel, which caused the object beneath the microscope to creep slowly back and forth.

Whiskey Phil was in a wilderness of bright scientific paraphernalia, none of which he understood. But the focus of the lights around the table directed his attention to the eight-inch lens beneath the microscope. Phil tried to intrude upon the doctor's concentration with a brisk "Good evenin'! Ish a nishe evenin'." Three times he repeated his greeting. Then his sociability flagged and he sat down on a bench to mutter to himself.

A wave from the doctor silenced him, and for the next half hour he sat there watching. Abruptly Dr. Silverhead turned, removed his spectacles and stared at Whiskey Phil through feverishly bright eyes.

"Not a flaw in it. It is perfect." The white-haired man rose and came over to Whiskey Phil with precise steps.

WHISKEY PHIL offered another greeting with his favorite comment on the nice evening, which the doctor ignored. It would seem that this was a moment of great achievement in the life of this scientist. A wealth of magnificent words was rolling off his tongue, and Phil sensed that they were an expression of exultation. He was fascinated by the wangling of the doctor's sharp-pointed beard and he tried to nod his acceptance of all that was being said.

"But there's this one possible error," the doctor was saying. "The fifth figure beyond the decimal point was blurred. It was either a six or an eight. As the completed lens stands it is perfect—for the *eight*."

"For the eight," Whiskey Phil echoed, with a glimmer of understanding. "Eight *what?*"

"I will put it into operation at once," the doctor continued, "if it focusses successfully, the missing digit was an eight. If it fails, I shall resume the

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task of microscopic abrasions until the point of six is reached. Could anything be more logical?"

"Nothin'," said Whiskey Phil. "It is the clearesh, mosh logical logic I ever heard. What yuh gonna do 'bout it?"

"Within a few minutes I will know," said the doctor, consulting his watch. "One living subject will prove the point. I will have the lens inserted within five minutes. The crucial test will follow at once."

"Thish . . . ish . . . gonna . . . be . . . good."

The doctor started to put on his spectacles, but for an intense moment he gazed at Whiskey Phil, now very much aware of this visitor's presence. "If you will just remain seated, sir, I shall be ready at once."

" 's all right, I'm in no hurry. I've got all night."

Whiskey Phil gestured with the pruning shears, but it occurred to him that they were best kept out of sight since they were such a valuable souvenir. He hid them away in his hip pocket.

A few minutes later he yielded to the doctor's suggestion that he climb the ladder to the pinnacle of a towering instrument. It was a dizzy climb. This massive pyramid of gleaming black tubes, crackling with electric sparks, rose out of a gaping rectangular hole in the floor. It had its base on a lower level—a stage with wings full of tattered old scenery. As Whiskey Phil neared the top of the ladder, he fancied himself an actor. He was 18 or 20 feet above the top of the proscenium arch when he reached the summit of his climb.

He turned and called down to the doctor. "Di'n't think I'd make it, didya?"

"No time to waste, sir. The power is on full. Proceed as I instruct you. There is a slide before you. You are to enter it feet first."

"Good ol' slipper shlide. Ish jis' like school dayzh."

"Everything is ready," the doctor ordered. "Proceed."

The drunken man obediently hurled his weight into the metal chute. He gave a hilarious shout as he swished down into the mysterious pyramid out of sight.

Dr. Silverhead bounded down a stairway to the level of the stage. He pranced back and forth in front of two short "slipper slides" which extended out from the base of the pyramid.

For thirty seconds he watched those two chutes expectantly. Nothing came out. He waited a full minute, then nodded decisively and switched off the power.

"It should have been six," he said to himself. "Two more days of grinding."

CHAPTER XXIII

A Lesson for Linda Lee

"BUT disintegration isn't at all complicated," said Dr. Silverhead, as he unfolded a scientific chart for the benefit of his audience of one. That one—Linda Lee—was the perfect audience. She listened attentively, rolled her large childlike eyes in astonishment, and understood absolutely nothing.

"Only two nights ago I disintegrated one of my subjects completely," the doctor continued. "The process requires less than twenty seconds. At the end of that time there is nothing left."

"How remarkable," said Linda Lee. "Did it hurt him?"

"Hurt is a trifling thing. What is hurt? A state of mind—always temporary. Exceedingly temporary in his case. Does an operation hurt? A lit-

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tle, perhaps, but it is necessary if the patient is going to regain his health. And this hurt was necessary to make our desired gains in new realms of science. By this subject's sacrifice I proved that my new lens was two-thousandths of a point off. But now I have rectified that error."

"Oh!" Linda Lee gasped. "Does that mean he'll be all right?"

"He no longer has any positive existence. The matter of which he was composed has been disintegrated. If you'll notice the round dots on this chart—"

"They look like dollahs and nickels and pennies falling through the aih."

The doctor smiled.

"These dots represent the electrons which make up the atoms of matter of which all physical substance is composed. This larger dot—"

"Speaking of dollahs," said Linda Lee, sliding off the subject of electrons, "what happened to this puhson's money when you disamputated him? Did it come daown one of those big spaouts?"

"Those chutes are where I expected him to reappear after he slid down into the top of the machine. If my lens had been perfect he would have been duplicated. *One* of him would have emerged through each chute."

"One of him?"

"This machine, once I have it functioning properly again, will make duplicates of anything, living or dead."

"I worked in an office once," said Linda Lee, "and we used carbon paper for duplicates."

"This process is slightly more complicated. In the first place, all matter is largely space . . ."

In a room between the laboratory and the court Marcus M. Drake paused by the door. Dr. Silverhead's conversation never interested him, but here was something new and strange in the doctor's manner. Drake turned to his two henchmen, who were working with broom and dustpan, sweeping up a broken bottle.

"I'd like to know," Drake snarled in an undertone, "which of you birds got him started drinking . . . Well, somebody must have done it. He never paid any attention to women before, but watch him go. You'd think she had him hypnotized into telling everything."

"Don't worry, Boss, nobody'll ever be able to understand him," said Mac. "What about it, are we gonna take him in on this proposition of pullin' stakes, or ain't we?"

"It's been my intention all along," said Drake, "to leave him high and dry when we move out."

"What I want to know is, how soon are we gonna load up and git moved?" Krug asked. "I figure we're a couple days too late already, if we expected to take Hamilton Craig along for protection—"

MAC nudged him. That matter shouldn't be brought up. Hadn't they taken enough browbeating from the boss already for letting their prisoner get away? That was the very bonehead that was going to make this moving job doubly difficult.

Instead of simply backing a truck up to the south side of the building, loading up their goods and driving off, they now had a few alert police to look out for.

In fact, there were evidences that a trap was about to close in around them. With a doubled police patrol on two sides, a new force of night watchmen building the tenanted sections of the building, and busy electricians mounting floodlights over the court, Marcus Drake's two henchmen were sure that a change of climate was urgently needed.

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They had even heard rumors that some work was going to be done on the old well, since there was very likely an accumulation of debris in the bottom of it.

"They'll have a sad surprise when they find it's clean as a whistle," said Marcus Drake. "One bolt makes that metal bottom as solid as concrete."

"I'll take care of it right away." Mac dumped the broken bottle in a waste-basket.

"Not today," said Drake. "Don't get in a hurry. We'll get out before any big trouble falls due. And we may have another deposit to make."

"In the well? You got another customer?"

"There's the trouble-maker or two still at large, by my figuring," said Drake. "Even if we know how to bluff Hamilton Craig out, there's still a stray or two that you lazy louts haven't accounted for. If they get foolish and bob up in our way we'll give 'em the courtyard exit."

The men gathered up some empty cardboard cartons and Drake dumped out the contents of a green steel tool-box that would do to pack part of the money in. They made their way up the stairs past the carpenters and plasterers to that part of the building which was still their private domain.

Meantime, Linda Lee continued her lesson in the mysteries of atoms, for the doctor had an amazing lot to tell her, with all sorts of charts and machines to illustrate his principles.

Her ability to turn into a card, he explained, was one of his applications of these processes involving the nature of matter.

"When you become a card the process is somewhat related to freezing. The activities of the electrons which compose your body are made to subside and you are condensed into a form that requires much less space. You return to normal when your atomic makeup is restored to its original space-filling organization."

"Gee!" Linda Lee gasped. "Then lots of make-up is what Ah must need if Ah want to be nohmal. Is that the ahdeah?"

She began powdering her nose, though this hardly seemed to be the response that Dr. Silverhead expected. He kept pointing to the big pyramid machine, describing the various actions that were brought about by a combination of light waves and vast electrical energy.

"If this new lens performs as I expect it to," he said, "no error will occur in the reintegrating of the billions of electronic impulses. The twin mechanisms above each chute will double those billions of impulses and two reintegrations of the original body of atoms will occur."*

LINDA LEE was fairly gasping. "Ah nevah heahd of anything so amazing befo'. Now do Ah know all about it?"

"No one ever knows all about it without going through it," said the doctor. "Allow me to demonstrate the difference in the lenses—the old one that only disintegrates, and the new one I'm ready to try. Now for a subject—" he paused, and his glittering gaze returned from the top of the ladder to

* The doctor's atom-building plant must have been so elaborately constructed that it was expected not only to form billions of atoms instantly; it would make all atoms exact duplicates of the pattern atoms—those comprising the body which entered the machine; it would construct two complete sets of these duplicate atoms, each set being formed with the same relationships as the original. Thus the pattern object, instantly disintegrated as it supplied its myriad impulses to the machine, was instantly reformed in each of two compartments within the machine, to emerge through the two chutes as two identical objects. —Author.

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focus upon Linda Lee. "Can you climb a ladder?"

"Me? Does yo' subject have to be a puhson? Won't it wuk on a chaiah o' a lamp o' a book?"

"Of course. Everything disintegrates and reintegrates in the same way, whether it be alive, like my subject the other night, or dead, like—er—" Dr. Silverhead groped for a suitable example—"well, if I remember correctly, this subject had on his person some sort of garden tool—yes, a pair of pruning shears. And they were disintegrated, too, of course, along with him and his clothes and any valuables he may have carried."

Linda Lee glanced at her watch. It was time for her to get back to work. She had promised to take Cornelia's shift.

Dr. Silverhead walked along with her.

"Or *was* it pruning shears? Why should he have carried pruning shears?"

The point was mildly disturbing to the scientist's mind, so unaccustomed to bothering with trifles. He led Linda Lee to the door above the basement stairs, and his glittering eyes combed the row of small tools hanging on the wall.

"No, I must be mistaken," he concluded. "But whatever he had, it has vanished for good, the same as my subject."

Linda Lee turned to stare blankly at the doctor.

"Gee, do you mean this puhson you-all have been talkin' abaout has sure 'nuf *vanished fo' good?"*

"In the interests of scientific advancement, you understand."

Linda Lee gulped and shook her head slowly. "Aftah all yo' big wo'ds Ah still hones'ly don' know what yo're up to. You-all ain't violatin' any laws, ah' yo'?"

For a moment Dr. Silverhead closed his eyes reflectively. "Sometimes I wonder. But no—my business manager takes care of everything . . . You will soon come back and let me demonstrate the lenses?"

"Ah—Ah guess so," said Linda Lee. She hurried on her way, her ears ringing with big wonderful words. Electrons. Atoms. Electrical impulses. Disintegration — or was it disamputation? Dr. Silverhead was certainly the most amazing man she ever met.

CHAPTER XXIV

Wedding Invitation

THE WEDDING OF HAMILTON CRAIG WILL TAKE PLACE THIS COMING SATURDAY AT TWELVE O'CLOCK NOON IN THE GARDEN. S I X CRAIGETTES A R E REQUESTED TO ATTEND, DRESSED AS BRIDESMAIDS. THEY WILL ASSEMBLE AT THE ARCADE EAST OF THE OLD WELL.

—H. C.

THAT was the new sign which the girls found on the reception room bulletin board one morning. Patsy read it through, ran upstairs uttering unladylike words, and came down with a handful of darts. She spent the forenoon throwing at the thing.

The other girls were slightly less demonstrative; they too were angered. After the rumors that had come through the keyhole on the night following the rescue of Hamilton Craig, they were more than ever sensitive about any mention of his romantic tendencies.

"What makes him think I care to be a bridesmaid — one of six?" asked Genevieve disdainfully.

"Have you looked up his ancestry,

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dear?" Cornelia asked mockingly. The thrust brought a giggle from Linda Lee. The snobbery of Genevieve was becoming vulnerable.

In fact, Genevieve and her ancestors had come in for a bit of ridicule on the previous evening. When she had come in after another evening out with Benjamin Dodge, the girls had listened at the head of the reception room stairs and had overheard her doing some very proud boasting about her forefathers.

Then she had asked Benjamin Dodge pointblank whether *he* could claim any great-great-grandfathers at Plymouth Rock.

"So that's your trouble, is it, Genevieve? Your ancestors came over on the Mayflower?" Benjamin Dodge had asked.

"They didn't," Genevieve replied, "but they should have. They missed the boat by ten minutes. So you see they *were* a part of the original band. Their proud spirit is in my blood."

And that was when Patsy, with her radio at the top of the stairs, had suddenly turned the volume up and the announcer shouted, "What your blood needs is Peabody's Purple Pills."

It amused Benjamin Dodge so much that Genevieve and everyone else could hear him laughing all the way down the street.

Now, at Cornelia's mention of ancestors, Genevieve made a cold shoulder gesture and walked off without a word.

Bridesmaids—all six of them?

That wasn't the way the Craigettes had heard it through the keyhole. That night of Hamilton Craig's rescue the talk in the office adjoining the reception room had lasted for an intense hour.

Four curious impressions had come to the girls out of what they had overheard.

The first and most dramatic: Hamilton Craig intended to marry very soon in order not to lose an inheritance, and he expected to marry one of his six Craigettes.

Second and most mystifying: The two voices—H.C.'s and Craig's—were so nearly identical that the girls, unable to see either man, were not absolutely sure that it was Craig who made this breath-taking statement. It could have been that other tall gentleman who had given his name as H.C. The two of them were talking things over so rapidly and with such a complete understanding that it was almost as if one man were discussing his own private plans aloud. Obviously there was the highest degree of co-operation between these two friends. And their voices were so nearly identical that the girls at the keyhole, unable to see either of them, kept gasping, "Now which one said *that?*"—"That was Craig . . . No, it was H.C. . . . Sssssh! They'll hear you."

Third among these confused impressions: Whichever man it was who intended to do the marrying, he had been in love. And his friend forced him to admit that he had never ceased to be interested in someone, in spite of his habitual attitude that women were poison. The girl of his choice probably wasn't aware of his long-enduring affection for her. He couldn't help that. He wasn't demonstrative, and he had been exceedingly busy "both at the studio and here." (At this point in the revelations the girls were sure it was Hamilton Craig.)

Then at last it came through like a bolt of lightning that these two men were undecided on one important matter: Which of them was to do the marrying in order to save the inheritance?

IT WAS understood that in any event there would be an equitable division

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of the money. The man who married would take two-thirds. There was no argument about that.

But each man preferred a smaller share of the fortune rather than the burden of marriage—until the talk came back to the matter of this mysterious former love. Gradually they revived their hopes that this object of their affections—and they didn't name her—might be persuaded to accept one of them.

"Which one of us do you think she could learn to love?" said one of the voices.

"Shall we flip for it?" asked the other. "It's a gamble, at best."

"I'd rather not."

"Then there is a shade of difference between us—"

"As a result of these weeks of contrasted experiences — the real estate falling to you, the studio to me."

"Our plan to keep our natures identical was doomed from the start. Every new experience will alter us. We may as well accept that fact."

The discussion turned down the avenue of psychology, and the quartet of keyhole listeners were lost in the deep forest. Retreating to their rooms, they had so much to talk about that the night's sleep was ruined. Patsy was certain that the mysterious former love was one of the six Craigettes, and Linda Lee agreed with her. But none of the four would take a bow; in fact, the whole group declared that they wanted nothing to do with either of these women-hating hermits whose affections were outweighed by a pending fortune —hardboiled Patsy sounding off most violently.

Privately the four girls doubtless had their separate opinions, as the other two —Hetty and Grace—also would have had, had they been present.

But the bulletin board notice which confronted them this morning caused a new flare-up of that group spirit of rebellion.

They were all to be bridesmaids? That suited them just fine! They certainly weren't interested in Hamilton Craig—nor in his mysterious cousin—as a possible husband.

But if they had been buying bridal veils they couldn't have gone to any greater pains to choose.

"Six Craigettes are requested to attend." But what if there were only four?

Craig answered that question by posting another bulletin. He offered a liberal reward to anyone who would locate any of the three missing employees—Hetty, Grace and Archie. He penned a postscript at the bottom:

THE WEDDING REQUIRES THE PRESENCE OF SIX *CRAIGETTES*

The offer of the reward impressed Cornelia more than the others because it bore a dollar sign. But the fact was, all four of the girls had already offered all the information they could about the missing persons. Since the night H.C. had made his appearance there had been a handful of private detectives at work on the case.

Cornelia, as bankrupt for clues as the others, nevertheless mobilized her Craigette Protective Association. Verrazzano neglected his salesmanship and became overly helpful in his obsequious way. A trio of bond salesmen also answered her call. However, she was unable to get in touch with Whiskey Phil Parker.

"Ah cain't believe but what he'll turn up soonah o' latah," Linda Lee would say, though every time she repeated it her childlike face would cloud with doubt.

No one guessed what a fog Linda

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Lee was walking through. Sometimes she thought she could not bear the weight of all these mysterious happenings. She must confide in someone. In whom?

Certainly not in Craig. He was much too busy. His private detectives? They were much too important, too snappish with their sharp questions:

"When did you last see Hetty and Grace? Speak up! Were they with Archie Burnette? What were they wearing? Which way did they go? You didn't notice? Why didn't you?"

NO, THOSE men were too unfriendly to confide in. Besides, today they were again searching the buildings and grounds and reporting their bad news to Hamilton Craig. (It was rumored among the tenants that some of the eccentric old doctor's friends were hiding out to avoid eviction—but of course the tenants knew nothing about the disappearance of Archie and the two Craigettes.)

Linda Lee's need of a confidant brought her back to the white-haired doctor with the sharp little beard who looked so much like a Kentucky colonel and who seemed to enjoy talking with her in big words.

Linda Lee crossed the court and entered the laboratory. She found Dr. Silverhead at work in a large room that had once been an auditorium within the old hospital. He was checking through boxes and crates of scientific equipment. He dropped the work at once, however, as soon as he saw her.

"All broken or damaged," he said, with a sweep of his arm toward the auditorium. "But unquestionably I can salvage enough of value to outweigh any rent bill. It's very strange I should be overdue. I must have a talk with Drake. But it is true I have yet to realize anything on my inventions. The fewer persons I've benefited—such as Hamilton Craig—have been simply experiments. And now you—"

"Ah came to ask you some questions," said Linda Lee. "The othah day you told me about a subject—"

"Stop right there," said the doctor. "You'll see it all for yourself. Can you climb a ladder? Ah—but you suggested we try a book or a lamp. Very good."

Following him up the steps Linda Lee found herself on the stage again, gazing up at the huge gleaming pyramid of black tubes. Dr. Silverhead pressed a switch and the sparks snapped. He crawled up to the top of the ladder and threw a book into the slide.

Within a few seconds two books appeared at the base of the pyramid, one coming forth from each of the projecting chutes.

The doctor shed his coat and tossed it in. At once two coats came out, identical to the last frayed thread in the buttonholes.

From another room Marcus M. Drake and his two henchmen looked in and saw the impossible. That freakish mass of machinery did make some sort of sense after all! *One of the doctor's experiments was actually working!* (Up to this moment Drake had taken all the scientific talk about the duplication of objects to be so much hogwash).

Before Drake's and Mac's and Krug's amazed eyes it was happening!

They saw the doctor drop a pocket-book in at the top; they saw two identical pocket-books slide out through the two lower chutes.

"All right, men, wake up," Drake snapped at his cohorts. "Do I have to tell you what to do? We've no time to lose."

"I don't getcha, Boss," said Mac.

"The money boxes, you numbskull. Get them down here. You saw what happened to his pocket-book."

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"You're gonna trust us, for once?"

"If that machine holds out there'll be plenty for all of us." Drake's growl turned into an evil laugh. "We can start a full grown state of inflation. Come on, I'll go with you . . ."

PRANCING around the old stage among the panels of dilapidated scenery, Dr. Silverhead was so well pleased with himself that he could hardly speak. He pointed jubilantly to the most conspicuous six-inch lens.

"It took only a microscopic change to make all the difference—the vast difference between reintegrating and failing to reintegrate. Would you like me to illustrate?"

"Ah guess so," said Linda Lee. She thought she had never seen the scientist's eyes so bright. She watched him as he swiftly changed the lenses. He placed the good one carefully on a stand, inserted another.

"Now you'll see how badly the old lens works. For several weeks I was uncertain of the source of my trouble. Nothing would reintegrate. I'll illustrate, if you'll just climb up the ladder, please."

Linda Lee felt a little stage fright as she ascended. But soon she was at the top. She combed her hair while awaiting further orders, as if she wanted to be well groomed for whatever experience this demonstration might involve.

"One moment, please. I've made a mistake," Dr. Silverhead said casually. He paused to consider. "This demonstration of the inadequacy of the faulty lens is entirely for your benefit. You should come back down and scrutinize the developments from this angle."

Linda Lee obediently crawled down the ladder and stationed herself in front of the pyramid.

"For a moment, I was being rather absent-minded. It would have been a mistake to let you serve as the subject. You'd have missed seeing what comes out—or rather, what doesn't come out. I'll be the subject myself."

He turned on the switch and climbed to the top of the ladder. Then he slid down into the pyramid, and Linda Lee observed the results.

Precisely as he had predicted, nothing came out. After several minutes of waiting she decided the demonstration must be over. It was certainly the strangest demonstration she ever hoped to see. It was funny that the doctor would leave without saying a word about turning the switch off. But he didn't reappear—anywhere—after that.

CHAPTER XXV

Money, Money, Money

THERE wasn't much time to crow about it, but Marcus M. Drake knew he'd played into the good fortune of a lifetime. That was what came of keeping your nerve and not being scared out at the first signs of trouble. Detectives floating through the place, were there? Well, they'd better watch their step. Marcus Drake had one very special piece of work to do before he and his cronies were through around here.

"Hold tight to those money boxes, boys," Drake growled, leading the way down to the stage. "Time's short and nobody's goin' to block our path now."

"It ain't quite dark, Boss," said Mac. "It ain't a good time to risk any gunplay."

"Nobody's goin' to block our path," Drake repeated, a feverish eagerness in his voice. "We've invested too many slit throats in this wad to let it slip. But don't worry, kid, there'll be no shooting unless the cops gang up on us.

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Hell, you think I've lost my touch? The well's still out there."

Drake lowered his voice to keep his enthusiasm under control. There was the towering pyramid of black tubes, still popping and crackling with streams of purple sparks. Where was the doctor?

"Is Silverhead up on the next floor? Scout around, Krug, and find out what's happened to him."

"I'll get him," said Krug.

"Hell, no. If he's busy don't bother him. As long as the damn thing's running—Krug, come back. Get up the ladder and pour it in."

"Can't he drop it in, box and all, Boss?" Mac suggested. "Or does he have to send the bills through loose? You saw the Doc's pocket-book go through."

"Don't quibble!" Drake roared. "Drop the box in. Throw it in. Kick it in. Hurry up about it . . . And the other box—"

"He's got 'em both, if he don't bust the damn ladder," said Mac

Krug made it to the top safely. He struggled to shift the weight of the two cases to the top of the slide.

Mac's imagination was beginning to grasp the wonders of this machine. He followed Marcus Drake to the middle of the stage where the two lower chutes emerged from the base of the machine, apparently ready to pour wealth at their feet.

"All those thousands, Boss. Think of it. We'll double 'em—"

"Double!" Drake sneered. "Didn't you get past the first grade? We'll put them through a hundred times, and then another hundred. Man, we'll pile up a mountain of bills. All we can cart away in our ten-ton truck—"

Krug shouted down from the pinnacle. "Here they go!"

The two boxes swished down the slide. Purple sparks continued to flow over the black tubes of the pyramid. But nothing came out of the two lower chutes. Something was wrong.

Marcus Drake's suspicions were always on tap. Had Krug sidetracked those boxes? "Go up that ladder, Mac, and see what's wrong."

For three frantic minutes Drake bounced around the machine, up the ladder, back down to the pay-off chutes. His mad investigation unearthed one shiny bit of evidence. Here was a substitute.

It was worth a try. He knew well enough after all of Dr. Silverhead's profuse fussing, where that lens might belong.

His puffy fingers trembled, but he succeeded in making the exchange. It could be that the little operation would put the machine in order. He tossed a screw-driver up to Krug, who was still perched on the top of the ladder.

"Throw it in," Drake yelled. "Maybe it'll knock the money loose."

Krug tossed the screw-driver into the slide. It disappeared. Ten or twelve seconds later two identical screw-drivers came out of the lower chutes. Drake held them up for the other to see.

"Now we're on the right track. We've got to find something big enough to gouge that money loose. Get that chair, Mac."

The chair went down the slide. Drake counted to ten. Two chairs struck the stage floor with a single thump.

But where was the money? Drake paced the floor like a madman. His henchmen felt black trouble looming around them. They made repeated experiments with other objects. The objects came through in duplicate—but no money.

Marcus Drake's fury turned on Krug. "Damn you, you threw it in. You

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go in and find it."

"What? Me? Listen, Boss—"

"You heard me. Dive in, Krug. Go in kicking. Knock that dough loose, damn it, or I'll paste you to the wall with lead!"

"You wouldn't—"

"Oh, wouldn't I?" Drake swung his gun upward with a gesture full of blind rage. Krug dived into the slide and went down kicking.

Two Krugs came sprawling out of the lower chutes. They got up in unison and stared at each other with identical amazement. Then their glares turned upon Marcus Drake. Their not too friendly appearance had a calming effect upon their boss.

But he was still the boss. "Come here, you men. Come here, Mac. Let's talk this over."

"Well, what did happen to the money?" Mac growled.

"Whatever happened," said Marcus Drake, with an inspiration that was more diplomacy than generosity, "we'll have to re-divide it. There are four of us now."

The two Krugs nudged each other.

"But we'd better face the bitter fact," said Marcus Drake. "The machine gave us a misdeal. The only thing to do is start over. How much money have you men got on you? Get that cigar-box, Krug . . . Hell, I didn't mean both of you . . . All right, toss your bills in, men, and we'll get this business rolling."

"It'll take us a devil of a long time to work up a thousand—"

"I knew you never got to the third grade, Mac," Drake taunted. "Now the idea is this. Every time two boxes come down we'll dump all the bills into one and discard the other. After we get one box jammed full, we'll tack it shut and get into high gear. Everything'll come through full. We'll stack half the boxes that come down and throw the other half back to the top for seed. Who's good at pickin' cigar bxes out of the air? You Krugs? All right, hike up the ladder, one of you. And for heaven's sake, don't fall in. I'll go nuts if any more of you spring up."

One of the Krugs ascended the ladder. Drake drew a satisfied breath and started to light a cigarette. But his shoulders stiffened and he tossed the cigarette aside.

"Anything wrong, Boss?" Mac asked.

"Keep the works goin', Mac," Drake bit his words. "I just saw a face at the door. To your left, toward the stairs."

"Who was it?"

"Someone I haven't seen for days—but I figure he's the guy that nearly clogged our waterworks a couple of times. Keep things going, Mac. It's dark out now. I'm going to take a little walk in the garden."

CHAPTER XXVI

Long-Lost Archie

THE person Marcus Drake had caught sight of had made his appearance on these premises about an hour earlier. Most of that hour had been spent in the bar on the west side of the block.

It had taken two police officers several hours of cruising through the streets before they discovered that their passenger—whose memory was nearly a blank—must be familiar with this part of the city.

They had parked just off Southwest Boulevard and had led their charge along the streets, watching his reactions toward the various doorways.

"Do you know this place, young man?"

"I—I don't remember."

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"We'll take him inside," said the sergeant.

The bartender blinked in surprise to see two strange officers entering. Then, noticing the young man between them, he said, "Hey, you're Archie, ain't you?"

"Is that your name?" the sergeant asked.

"I don't remember—could be."

The bartender raised an eyebrow. He hoped this lad wasn't in trouble.

"He's had a bad bump," said one of the officers. "And he came pretty near drowning a half mile out from shore. But he can't remember anything. Outside of that he's in pretty good shape. Aren't you, Archie?"

"I'm feeling all right."

"Remember me?" the bartender asked. "No? . . . Say, I've got a letter someone left for you. Is it O. K., officer, if I give him a letter?"

"Sure, go ahead. Maybe it'll put him on the track."

The officers watched Archie's puzzled face as he studied the letter. They took pride in taking the bartender aside and telling him all about the case.

They were following through because they believed this young man must know about a gang of criminals. Some of his unconscious mumblings a few hours after his rescue had sounded as if he knew plenty.

But that wasn't all they had to go on. They had found him floundering in the sea a half mile out from the storm-sewer—only an hour after they had found the body of a murdered man along that same shore. This all appeared to be a follow-up of other similar murders as yet unsolved.

"If he gets his memory back," said the sergeant, "he may tell us things. And I figure we're on the right trail to bring him back."

"Didn't he have any identification?"

"Too badly soaked to make sense. He mumbled something about losing a gun. All he had besides his clothes was a little leather book. Would you believe it—they found him holding a wad of something up out of the water. It was a calm sea, and when he'd turn on his back he'd pack this wad on his chest, like he thought he could keep it out the water. He might have swum all day if they hadn't found him. Had no idea where he was going. His only purpose was to keep his packet dry. Of course it got soaked all the same."

"What was it?"

"His coat all bound up around this little leather book—hey, Archie!"

Archie looked up listlessly. He had laid the letter aside, preferring to devote his attention to his sandwich.

"Show the man your book, Archie."

ARCHIE unpinned the safety pin in the over-size coat the first-aid station had furnished him. He snapped the little leather book cover open long enough to reveal the single shiny white card it contained. Then he pinned it back in his pocket and went on eating his sandwich.

"Funny thing was, that card didn't seem to be wet," said one of the officers. "Some unusual material."

"A secret message, maybe," the bartender suggested.

"Just a blank card. No invisible ink or anything. We've hounded him to tell us what it means to him, and he says it's the *only thing of any importance*. That's all you can get out of him. I'm sure he's forgotten why it's important. Or else he's got his wires crossed and it don't amount to anything—"

"But just try to take it away from him," the other officer added. "To change the subject, am I right in figuring that that big storm-sewer crosses

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under this hill?"

"Damfino," said the bartender.

The officers asked Archie for his letter, and he welcomed them to read it aloud.

"Dear Archie: Drake's next snip will be a pip. Haw, haw! Get it? Some gag. It only cost a quarter."

"But I don't get it," Archie commented.

"He was drunk when he wrote it," said the bartender. "He was always drunk."

The officer read on:

"By the way, Archie, that sock in the jaw knocked sense in me. Not much but a little. Been meaning to see your boss but always forgot what I wanted to tell him. It's about my niece, Grace. She's really one swell kid—I know. If your boss only knew it, she would be one angel believe me, and I think I'll get out and quit making trouble. Tell him for me, will you, Archie?

Yours,

P. Parker."

"That's a queer letter," said the sergeant. "Who's P. Parker? . . You don't remember anyone by that name? Or the niece? . . . What's the name of your boss?"

Archie shook his head slowly. "I'm trying—give me time."

"Take it easy," said the sergeant. "Tell you what. You just start out and walk around—anywhere you feel like walking. We'll talk with you some more after while. Go ahead."

Archie Burnette strolled halfway around the block, drifted through the old hospital building into the court. He followed along under the arcade, entered an open door, looked into the laboratory.

And thus it was that he saw the Drake gang working feverishly around the big scientific instrument.

ARCHIE frowned. This was all so very vague, yet not completely unfamiliar. That thick-set man putting a monocle to his eye—hadn't Archie seen him before?

Now the man slipped into a rough jacket and came over to Archie. He began talking about his garden. He carried a pair of pruning shears.

He led the way to an old well. He was being very friendly, but Archie wished it weren't so dark out here. What had happened to his friends, the officers? Were they following?

At the gardener's suggestion Archie bent down to try to see the water. Instantly the friendly hand on his shoulder became a heavy pressure on the back of his neck. Instantly the pruning shears came up and snapped at his throat.

It was an exceedingly strange experience. Did the gardener mean it for a joke or was he trying to do Archie injury?

The darkness was suddenly banished. All over the court there was bright light. A battery of floodlights had come on.

The gardener was snarling, glaring at the ineffectual tool in his hands.

"Rubber blades!" he growled, flinging the tool in the bushes. He grabbed Archie with both hands. But two of his friends were rushing out to him yelling at him to lay off and come out of the light. Then Archie knew he felt like fighting, and he fought.

He whirled out of the grip of those puffy, sweaty hands. He smashed out with his fists. He landed a hard right that sent a shudder through the gardener's frame.

Then the fists flew. Under the floodlights the streaks of shadows jumped and crossed. Suddenly Archie caught a terrific blow on the point of the chin.

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He was seeing colored lights—lights in the back of his head. He bounced against the stone railing of the well.

That blow left him terribly groggy—but in some strange way it made everything clearer. *That man was Marcus Drake, whose business was murder.*

CHAPTER XXVII

Free for All

GUNS began to pop. Archie sat up and rubbed his swollen cheek and gave his head a few twists to make sure it was still attached. The fight had almost done him in. Like a revolt breaking out over a peaceful village, the fracas had suddenly spread to all corners of the court.

A few police officers had bobbed up from somewhere and gunplay was the order of the day. Drake's slippery band leaped for cover and moved back toward the laboratory doorway, returning shot for shot.

Once Archie saw two Krugs running in the same direction, and he thought he was seeing things.

Once he saw a beautiful girl hurrying in through a doorway ahead of the gangster retreat, and she looked so much like Hetty that he knew he was seeing things.

But his hand slapped against his side and suddenly he knew. He was up with a bound, racing across the garden. That recent fist fight with Drake had ripped his coat pocket off and torn the leather book open. So Hetty had come to life! And now she was in the path of fire!

Hetty wasn't the only girl mixed up in this miniature war. Archie caught a glimpse of a Craigette with red hair, her eyes full of fire and hands full of brickbats. He ducked. She let fly with a brick and her aim was good. It caught one Krug in midflight and brought him down, and a second later an officer was on him.

"Not bad, sister!" the officer shouted.

"Tell it to Craig," the girl snapped, beating it for cover.

Archie couldn't have taken a straighter course for the laboratory if he had been a bullet. As a matter of fact, he had flying bullets to direct him most of the way. He heard his sergeant shout, "Get that girl out of there!"

That was exactly what he meant to do. But Mac and Drake were following her. Not only for protection from bullets. As Archie cut in ahead of them he realized there was something else—a camera. What it contained would send Drake to the electric chair in a minute. It was like Drake to think he could still beat this game.

"Get rid of it, Hetty!" Archie shouted. "They're after *it*, not you! Throw it away!"

She heard, and as she ran she looked for some place where she could safely hide it. But now Archie overtook her in a dead-end passage—a room on the second floor level, whose floor terminated before stage ropes, a ladder and some scientific apparatus.

Drake and Krug were pounding up the stairs.

Hetty hesitated at the brink, completely out of breath. Her sharp eyes were tinged with fear for once. She looked at the stage, and knew that the ladder was the only chance—and that she wasn't equal to it. Not with the camera.

"Give it to me," Archie snapped. "Anything to get rid of it."

He took it from her hands, tossed it at the one spot where he thought it might fall safely out of sight—a smooth metal slide at the top of the huge black electrical instrument. Then he caught

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Hetty up in his arms, crossed onto the ladder, facing forward and leaning back to take full advantage of its angle.

Archie and Hetty were halfway down when they heard some very conclusive shots from the floor above.

"That ought to get him!" It was the voice of Archie's sergeant. It was accompanied by a low, guttural groan that was unmistakably Marcus M. Drake.

The shooting and shouting and running had now come to a stop. The voices that Archie could hear were those of policemen who were feeling pretty well satisfied that they had cleaned house; and occasionally the bated words of wounded or handcuffed prisoners. Everything seemed so quiet.

So quiet that Hetty looked up at Archie with a curious smile, which reminded him that he was still standing on the seventh rung of the ladder.

It wasn't a particularly safe place to stop and talk, for the low snapping of purple sparks continued close by.

"Look down there, Archie," said Hetty, pointing to the stage floor. "Isn't that my camera?"

"Which one?" said Archie. "I see two of them."

"It won't take long to tell which is mine," Hetty said. "Mine has some pretty valuable films in it—and something else a whole lot more valuable. Did you ever miss one of your cards, Archie?"

"You mean Grace?"

"I was afraid we'd lose her that night in the tunnel, so I slipped her into my camera. I meant to tell you. I do hope she's all right."

CHAPTER XXVIII

Saturday Noon

THE hour had arrived. A warm sun shone down upon the garden. Radio music from one of the mansion windows provided a spirited background for the excited talk of four Craigettes dressed in bridesmaids' gowns. They were sitting at a card table sipping cokes.

EVERYONE in a gay and happy mood? Well, not exactly. What with no wedding in sight, no decorations, no bride, and no groom, they were not professing any raptures of delight.

But the excitement of the recent days gave them more than enough to talk about.

Carlo Verrazzano hailed them from across the path, and approached with many a deep bow and profuse apology for breaking in upon so lovely a foursome. However, he had some news that he thought should be conveyed to Cornelia without delay.

"Eet ees like you say, Meess Corneelia. Everee time I put one bottle of our most wonderful perfume into the machine, two bottles come out. When I put in two, four come out."

"That's the very idea," said Cornelia. "I'm going to get rights on that machine, and we'll organize a big manufacturing concern. Now don't start getting tired, Carlo."

"She calls him Carlo," Genevieve whispered.

"But what I must tell you," Varrazzano continued, "I find a seegar box weeth money. M a y b e counterfeet, maybe not. I take beeg magnifying glass out of macheene to look at eet. Veree good money. So I put seegar box in next, why not?"

"Well?"

"It never yet come out. I think macheene must be very broke."

"What about that magnifying glass?" Cornelia snapped. "Did you put it back where you got it?"

"Ooooh! Such bad luck. It slip out of my hands, break all to pieces."

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"Oh-oh!" Cornelia caught her breath, and for a moment the other Craigettes thought she was going to turn into a card. But the effects of the original transformation were beginning to wear off. "There goes my last financial empire. I'm glad I didn't throw away that bond salesman's telephone number." Cornelia made a sharp gesture with her index finger. "As for you, Verrazzano, march right back and pick up the pieces. And don't speak to me again till you've put them back together."

"She doesn't call him Carlo," Genevieve whispered.

Verrazzano marched.

The habits of transforming into cards were definitely passing, the girls agreed. And Linda Lee said she had known all along it would be that way. The doctor had told her lots of things.

What other inside information had she been holding out? Well, there was the doctor's strange disappearance. She believed he might be gone for good. Maybe he wanted to live in some more spiritual realm or something. Yes, she practically saw him go. Honestly, he was the most miraculous person. He could duplicate anything with that wonderful machine. He admitted having performed experimental favors for Hamilton Craig. And it wasn't his fault if Craig had had a burst of bad temper and had torn out all those pretty copper ornaments in the office doorway.

GENEVIEVE kept glancing at her watch.

"Getting nervous?" said Cornelia. "I've known all along that you were Craig's mysterious one-time love."

"But I'm not," Genevieve said. "Benjamin Dodge and I—er—" she smiled and all at once her haughtiness was melting. "We have a date as soon as this is over."

"Oh? I thought you two had quarreled over ancestors."

"When I tell you the latest you'll really laugh," said Genevieve, coming down off her snobbish high-horse. "I can take it. I'm through being stuck up over ancestors. Ben showed me the records."

"She still calls him Ben," said Patsy.

"He showed me that my ancestors and his ancestors both missed the Mayflower by ten minutes because my ancestors were too slow getting his ancestors' boots blacked."

"Not really!"

"When I get to be Mrs. Benjamin Dodge," said Genevieve, "I'll never hear the last of that."

"Then who is Craig going to marry? If it's one of us—"

"Maybe me," said Patsy with a toss of her red head. "He was awful proud of me when I knocked out that gangster with a brick."

"Don't worry," said Cornelia. "He'd never trust you with the crockery."

"He'll never get the chance," said Patsy, her hopes giving way to a flash of anger. "You think I'd ever be sap enough to love, honor, and *obey* a guy who'd marry to save a fortune?"

"For my part," said Cornelia, "that would depend on the size of the fortune. What about you, Linda Lee? You've been so quiet there must be something on your mind."

"Ah don' think Ah've got a mind," Linda Lee said sadly. "An' if you-all think Ah'm Craig's suppressed desiah yo' wrong. Ah'm off to college as soon as Ah can get packed. An' when Ah leahn my lessons Ah'm goin' to fall in love with a professah—one that knows all the big wohds."

"What Craig needs," said Genevieve, "is a nice, steady, devoted girl who will worship him all her life. I'm thinking of Grace—"

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"She and Hetty are lost," said Cornelia. "We'll never see either of them again."

The girls fell silent. The blithe radio music sounded a discordant note upon their gloom. In recent days their hopes for their missing companions had been choked by unspoken terrors.

"Wait a minute," said Patsy. "Didn't I see Hetty the other night when the shooting was on? Sure I did. But I was so excited I—"

"You've been having those dreams too," said Genevieve.

"Ah have big wondahful dreams," Linda Lee mused, "whenever Ah come back from bein' a cahd. The doctah wouldn't tell me why. But I wondah if it isn't yo' mind floatin' round waitin' fo' yo' brain to get regravitated."

"I dreamed I was hearing Grace and her Uncle Phil talking," said Genevieve. "It all happened so quick that Grace couldn't believe he was dying."

"Dying?" said Cornelia. "Why, I caught the same dream—just as I was returning from my card state."

"That's what Ah was sayin'," Linda Lee gasped. "Ah was listenin' in, an' Ah heahd Whiskey Phil say—"

"That he was sorry for all the harm he had done Grace," Patsy interrupted. "But I don't believe in dreams."

"THESE dreams are different," said Genevieve. "It's like Linda Lee said—for a minute your mind is sort of free. But all four of us couldn't have had that dream at the same time. What we overheard must have hung in the air or something. I wonder—"

"Ah wish we could ask the doctah."

"I wish we could talk with Grace and Hetty," said Patsy.

On comparing, Genevieve found that she had caught a fuller dream than the others. And they listened spellbound as she brought back the clear details. There had been something heart-rending in Whiskey Phil's last words. He had glanced back over his wrecked life. He kept apologizing for the way he had embarrassed Grace once—a long time ago—*in the presence of Hamilton Craig*—and it was awful.

"But she never knew Craig before," said Cornelia.

"I only know what I dreamed," said Genevieve staunchly. She was perfectly convinced that Grace had been Hamilton Craig's one-time love. All of Grace's preoccupation with morals had developed as her defense against her Uncle Phil's grotesque exhibitions of sinfulness.

"But in his last whispers he was trying to set things right," said Genevieve. "He told Grace she must forget him and be happy and bring back her sense of humor."

"An' she said she would try," said Linda Lee. "Ah remembah now."

"And then — the strangest thing," Genevieve went on. *"Hetty's voice came into the conversation.* And *she* promised that she and all of us Craigettes would help Grace. And finally, when Grace told her Uncle Phil goodby, she was happy in her resolve. There. What do you make of it?"

Cornelia shook her head. "All I make of it is, Grace and Hetty are both dead."

"Don't you believe it," came Hetty's voice from the mansion path. "Or am I just the new maid bringing you girls some more cokes?"

EVENTUALLY a minister made his appearance on the scene—and a very dubious appearance it was—a supreme demonstration of confusion and helplessness. For with him came two identical grooms, both named Hamilton Craig, who were escorting two identical brides named Grace. The minister for

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the life of him couldn't get it through his head that he was *sure* to marry the right Grace to the right Craig, even though he couldn't tell either couple from the other. Both Craigs kept bombarding the poor fellow with confusing instructions, and both Graces were laughing so hard that they never thought to question the rights and wrongs of this unprecedented situation.

Tenants crowded down to the arcade doorway to see what was happening, and the Craigs shouted to them to come on and get in on the wedding party.

"Just one big happy family," said Patsy to the other exasperated bridesmaids.

And before any state of order could be attained and the bridesmaids could be made to understand where the duplicates had come from and the gathering cameramen and curiosity seekers could be quieted, one bridesmaid had been led away to a quiet corner for a few private words with the one lone best man.

"We may as well get into the spirit of this event," said Archie Burnette as he took Hetty's hands, "because as soon as it's over I'm going to go get a license. But first I've got to know whether you're going to turn into a card every time I kiss you. It would be darned inconvenient."

Hetty laughed. "That happened a few times because I was so surprised. But now—well, the truth is, I'm afraid I almost expect it."

Archie believed in putting theories to a practical test. And not a hasty test either. He removed the camera that hung from her shoulder, took her in his arms and kissed her.

"There. So you're not going back into a book?"

"At a time like this?" Hetty breathed. "If I do you can pack me on ice for life."

THE END

VIGNETTES OF FAMOUS SCIENTISTS

By ALEXANDER BLADE

Bessel

He was a naturalist. His great work was the famed 44-volume "Natural History" which ranked as a classic for a half-century

FRIEDRICH WILHELM BESSEL was born at Minden, Germany, July 22, 1784. He was destined by his father for a commercial life, but at a very early age exhibited so strong an inclination to science, and particularly to astronomy, that he was ultimately and very wisely allowed to follow his natural tendencies. Having been given an excellent education in the fundamentals, he read and studied the higher branches by himself, and by 1810 his standing among observational astronomers had become so high that he was offered the directorship of the observatory at Königsberg in East Prussia, and the chair of astronomy in the university there. In these positions he added greatly to his reputation by the numerous discoveries made in the observatory, and by the publication of two notable works, namely, *Fundamenta Astronomiae* in 1818, and *Tabulae Regiomonotanàe* in 1930, both of which were unusually meritorious literary and scientific productions for their day.

His great achievement was the determination of the parallax of the star 61-Cygni. His method was not only entirely new, but extremely ingenious. He selected this particular star, because he suspected, for various reasons, that it was one of the nearest to the solar system, and hence might have a parallax capable of being measured with the heliometer. He then proceeded to determine every clear night, its position relative to two neighboring very small and dim stars, which he selected for the purpose, because he concluded they were so immeasurably farther away, that no change in their position could be detected.

Accordingly, as he had hoped, he found that 61-Cygni was moving, with respect to these two, and in fact, was describing a tiny elliptical curve in the sky, which was nothing more than a minute

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reproduction in space of the earth's orbit around the sun. This made it clear that the star had an apparent motion, due to the real motion of the earth, and this proved to be large enough to be measurable by the heliometer. Having then the area of two ellipses, whose relative dimensions were identical, it became a simple matter of calculation as to how far apart they were. 61-Cygni was thus found to be distant from the earth the equivalent of 8.1 light years, which meant that it lies approximately 500,000 times as far away from us, as our central orb, the sun.

Bessel's method is rightly regarded as one of the most ingenious in its conception, and famous in its results, in the annals of astronomical research. By its use, the parallax of a large number of the stars have since been determined, and consequently their distance from our system. Bessel's industry as an observer was such that during the years 1821-33 he brought the number of accurately known stars up to 50,000, and thus laid the foundation for the great *Bonn Durchmusterung*, which was carried out by his successor, Argelander.

It is not too much to say that Bessel was the father of modern observational astronomy, and there is scarcely a department of this science that was not improved or perfected by him; and his work in mathematical astronomy was almost equally important. Apart from the large scope of his activity, he introduced the effective use of the heliometer, the correction for personal equation and the systematic investigation of instrumental errors. Among other achievements, he added Bessel's Functions to the resources of the mathematical physicist. Modern astronomy of precision is essentially Bessel's creation.

Aristarchus

This Greek Scientist was the first scientist to maintain that the earth revolves around the Sun

THE native place of Aristarchus was at Samos, on the island of Cephalonia off the western coast of Greece. He flourished about 270 B.C., and is famous for having been the first to maintain that the earth revolves around the sun. He is distinguished as having made the first recorded attempt to ascertain the comparative distances of the sun and the moon from the earth, by geometrical means.

Nothing else is known of his history, and all his writings have been lost except a short essay *On the Sizes and Distances of the Sun and Moon*, describing his solution of this problem. In his day the earth was regarded as fixed and immovable in space, while the sun, moon, planets and stars moved around it. But to him it seemed more reasonable that the earth was a satellite of the sun, and the phenomena of eclipses—which he seemed to have thoroughly understood—confirmed him in this belief, for at their occurrences it was evident that the shadows cast by the earth on the moon, and by the moon on the sun, indicated clearly the relative distance of each. He therefore reverted to the older theory, according to which the earth was not stationary but revolved daily on its axis, insisting that the central fire postulated by Pythagoras was a myth, and that the sun did not shine by reflected light, but was itself luminous and, in fact, the source of all light coming to the earth, not only directly, but by reflection from the moon, the planets and the stars.

Acting on this theory he reasoned that when the moon's phase was in its first or third quarter, at which times it showed itself as a half sphere, the position which the three bodies occupied with respect to each other must be those at the vertices of a right-angled triangle, the moon being at the right angle of 90°, the sun at the most acute of the other two, and the earth at the least acute.

He then attempted to measure with such instrumental assistance as was available in his day, the amount of the angle between the sun and the moon at the earth, at the half-moon stage of the satellite, and after repeated observations concluded that it was in the close vicinity of 83°. As the sum of the angles of a plane triangle are invariably 180°, and as the angle at the position of the moon was, by assumption, 90°, that at the sun must be the difference between 83° and 90°, or 7°. Having then the three angles of the triangle it was a simple geometrical problem to calculate the relative length of the line extending from the earth to the sun, namely as one to twenty.

In theory Aristarchus was absolutely correct. But in his day no instrument for measuring angles accurately between bodies at great distances from each other was in existence. Moreover, and for the same reason, it was not possible then to determine exactly the half-moon stage. His data therefore were in error, and hence his conclusion. It is now known that the angle at the earth between the moon and the sun, at the half phase of the former, is only a fraction of a minute less than 90°, instead of 83°. In consequence, the comparative length of the two distances from the earth to the moon, and from the earth to the sun, is as one to four hundred in place of one to twenty.

Aristarchus' essay on this subject was published in Latin at Venice in 1498, and at Oxford in 1688 in the original Greek text.

Aristarchus added 1/1623 of a day to Callippus' estimate of 365¼ days for the length of the solar year. He is also said to have invented a hemispherical sun-dial.

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LITTLE YOWLIE

By Warren A. Reed

ORVILLE FLETCHER, the artist, sat himself down at the bar of the Inn and ordered Bourbon. Bourbon, in the morning, meant a whole day of tippling. But Lord! He sighed.

It was always that way when he wasn't working; and his painting by now was a thing of the dim, dim past. Not that he hadn't tried; less and less frequently of late, perhaps, but the talent that had been his was definitely gone. In its place, was this great lassitude.

The ugliness of life!

Ten years ago, three things had happened to Orville Fletcher; his wife had died, his only daughter had been married; and he had become the sole owner of a set of false teeth.

Because of one of these incidents, or perhaps the times, or perhaps the fashions, or perhaps because of his lack of responsibilities, something had caused a falling off in the sale of his wares. Or perhaps it wasn't any one of these things, but just the fact that he could no longer paint. From depth and glow, his paintings were now flat, unimaginative color-washes of nothing at all. He had taken to whisky to dull the ache of his thwarted ambitions. The whisky further dulled the edge of his art and finally old age had taken a hand in the game and it was seemingly the beginning of the end for Orville Fletcher.

The whisky soothed him and yet, as usual, it gave him the desire to get drunk. Some day he must quit drinking, he thought; quit drinking and really get to work. It was the thousandth time that he had made this resolution. He hesitated and then ordered another drink.

Late that night, into his besotted mind, a thought crept. No place on this Earth for a failure. He was useless. Why remain to clutter things up with his worthless presence.

Yes, he decided, it was best . . .

He stumbled to his feet, left the Inn and took the path down to the river. He crossed over at the dam and the sky was all white in the east. The dew was heavy and the tall grasses were wet. He cursed and struck them aside with his cane, and his breeches were

Fletcher had lost the incentive to paint. Then he met "little Yowlie" and earned the right to two wishes . . .

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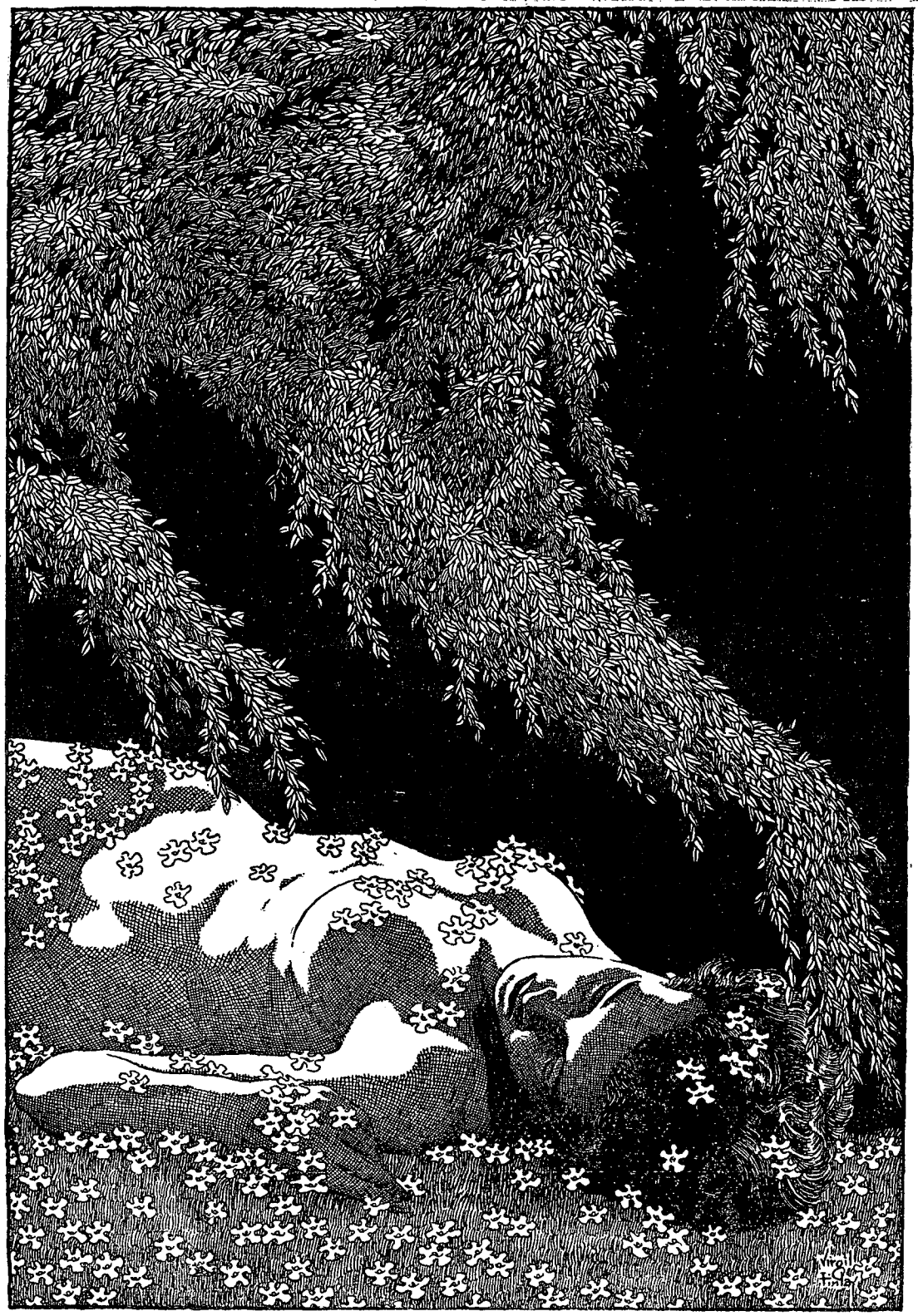

There on the river bank lay a lovely girl of twenty . . .

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soaking wet above his knees before he had gone a hundred yards.

His feet hurt.

The river made a sweeping bend, and poplar slashings stood close in about a quiet pool. The woods were dank with giant ferns but a grassy greensward flowed around a stump and spread down to the bank of the river. It was very quiet. He sat down on the stump and began to pull off his boots.

He saw a motion in the grass.

Without a great deal of curiosity, he thrust out his cane. Something small and very much alive tumbled out of the grass hummock and made off toward the river bank in a great hurry. Drunkenly he dropped on all fours and slapped at the creature in the grass with his hand.

"Hi! You big oaf, you're hurting me."

THE voice was as small as the voice of conscience, and Orville Fletcher nearly swallowed his teeth.

Fletcher withdrew his hand. Pink elephants, snakes, or talking frogs, what difference did it make. More than one doctor had warned him. This was it; he should have stopped drinking long ago.

The crumpled grasses stirred—and then, a little man, not over three and one-half inches tall, arose and walked upright forthwith.

"I am Mr. Yowlie," the being said in a matter-of-fact voice.

Orville Fletcher sat stupefied.

"Oh, the disgrace of it—the utter disgrace. Why, there hasn't been one of us caught for over a hundred years—not since me own great-grandmother, back in Ireland, in 1837. And it's all your fault. What in the name of the Queen were you doing up at this time i' the morning, anyway?"

"I'm sorry—" Orville Fletcher was nothing if he was not polite. The habits of a lifetime clung to him in this hour.

"Sorry!" the little man snorted, and in his rage he stamped his foot so hard that it actually bruised the petals of a violet. "Sorry—I should think you would be. What am I going to tell the Queen? And I suppose you expect me to give you the usual three wishes for letting me go? Not I! One—I'll give you one. Just one wish and be quick about it."

Fletcher looked about him. The river flowed majestically on. A bass flopped in the dark water. He turned back; the little man was still there.

"Come—one wish I will give you—one wish is all."

"One wish?" Orville Fletcher mumbled. If he were crazy, he would make the most of it. "One wish, Mr. Yowlie—why not a dozen?"

"We never give more than three wishes," the little man said coldly. "Seldom three, in fact. You should be satisfied with one."

"Pooh! You mean to say that your life isn't worth three wishes?"

"I'm thinking of *your* life," Mr. Yowlie said. "One never makes three wishes without wishing the last one undid the first . . . at least that's been my experience," he finished pertly.

"Well, two then." Fletcher knew that it was the whisky. And yet . . .

"Two it is. But be quick about it."

Two wishes! If it were only true. Well—there was his painting. But there was no use for him to wish that he could paint—he could paint. It was just that he didn't want to. Always, he had depended upon someone for inspiration. Always, he had been a little in love with someone. Always, someone that he loved depended upon him to paint. Now if he were only in love with someone again; and she in love

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with him— Ah!

"I wish," he said boldly, "I wish that there was a beautiful girl of divine perfection, about twenty-one years of age—in love with me." He said the last few words humbly.

"And your second wish?"

THE artist turned. There, on the bank of the river, stood a girl. Her arms were raised. Her ecstatic face mirrored her thoughts. Slender, beautiful —twenty-one.

"Come—your second wish. You have your first, and a lifetime to admire her and live with her." Again, little Yowlie stamped his foot. "Your second wish—"

The girl, all dressed in white, seated herself on the river bank. She spread her skirts and sank to the ground with a single motion. Her every posture was a poem. Her limpid eyes gazed at Orville Fletcher and they were full of the worship that she did not try to conceal. His face was flushed, his graying hair rumpled, and he smiled in a dazed sort of way. And then, suddenly he remembered. Like a dash of cold water in a sleep-walker's face, it came to him—he was fifty. This thing had come too late. He would be but an old man's passion. To her, he would always be old—old enough to be her father. He was fifty—fifty, and a failure. If this could only have happened twenty years ago.

"Come, I can wait no longer. Make your wish and let me begone. I am sorry now that I wasted time with you at all; one wish would have been sufficient."

"I wish—" Orville Fletcher hesitated. "I wish—I wish, that this was twenty years ago . . ."

A sudden shock of excruciating pain shot through the lower portion of Fletcher's face. It accumulated in the axis or pivotal point of his jaw and resembled nothing so much as a dislocation. He could scarce forbear a groan. It was as if his mouth were being forcibly pried open and something irregularly hard set astride of the top of his tongue. His lips were drawn back in a horrible grimace. For a moment, he failed to understand. His finger explored. Yes, indeed—there were two sets of teeth in his mouth; the false ones and—he tore the offending plates from his oral cavity and hurled them to the ground—there was a full set of teeth left—real teeth—his own teeth.

He looked down at his hands; they were brown and firm and hard. His shoulders fitted in the sleeves of his coat too snugly, but well. His waist was thinner. Gone was his fatigue. He felt twenty years younger. He *was* twenty years younger. He was only thirty years old.

He turned. But the little man had gone. Gone without as much as a single good-bye.

The girl! Suddenly he thought of the girl. For a moment he was confused. The greensward was still strewn with wild flowers. The patient river flowed on its meandering course. But the girl? Where was the girl?

Only a white bundle lay on the river bank. A small bundle, a round bundle, wrapped in blankets and swaddling clothes, and from it came a puling cry.

A baby! Oh, Lord. Suddenly he realized what had happened in the twenty years which he had so carelessly wished away.

A baby . . . His baby! Just one year old.

Then it was, that Orville Fletcher knew that he did have something to work for. Someone to love and someone who might love him. Now he knew, at last, that he could paint again.

THE END

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By CHESTER S. GEIER

Wherever aviators were, the legend grew—a legend of a heaven for aviators alone. Aviara, it was called, and if you believed . . . well, this pilot believed!

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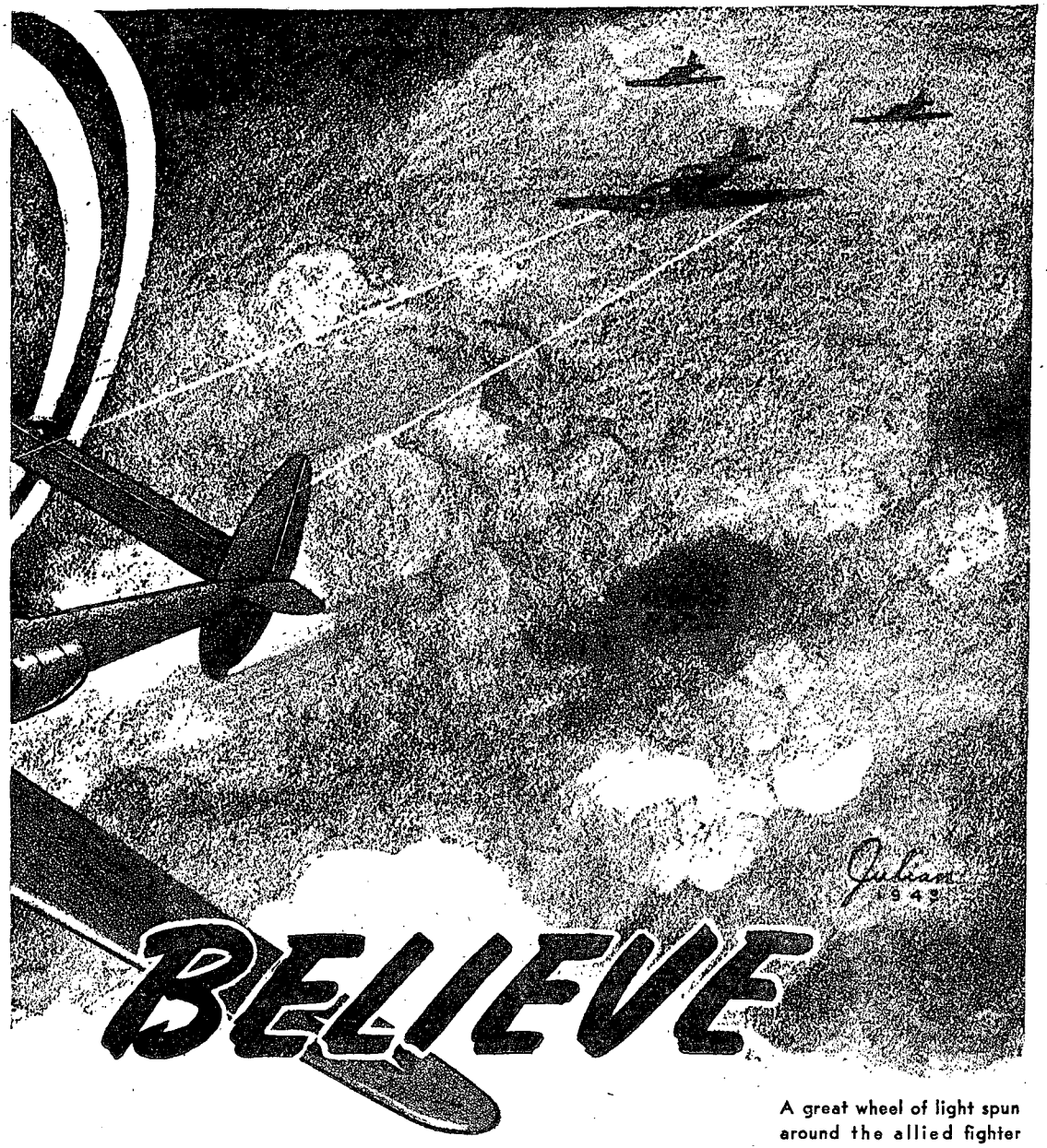

A great wheel of light spun around the allied fighter

ON THE field of the drome great Lancaster and B-17 bombers were warming up preparatory for a raid. Mechanics and handlers swarmed everywhere, making final check-ups on the bombers and wheeling into position their escorting fighter craft, P-38 Lightnings, Hawker Hurricanes, and Spitfires. Orderlies darted about with last-minute instructions. Pilots, gunners, navigators, bombardiers, and radio-men were waiting in the barracks, pulling on helmets, adjusting 'chute packs.

The center of attention was a big, blond gunner, who had more than a score of Nazi aircraft to his credit.

"Ever heard of Aviara?" he asked.

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"Aviara?" several of his listeners echoed.

"What is Aviara?" one of the youngsters prompted.

The gunner spoke with his eyes fixed upon a far distance, as if each word were building something there.

"Aviara is the sky fighter's paradise. It's the place where all good airmen go."

None of the listeners said a word. It was very still in the barracks.

"Why shouldn't there be a place like that?" the gunner demanded, as though in defense of the concept. His voice rose persuasively. "Look. Civilians have their Heaven—but has it ever occurred to you that it would hardly be suited to the requirements of us airmen after fighting in the war? Fighters have always had their own special kind of heaven. Greek warriors of ancient times had their Isles of the Blest. Vikings had their Valhalla. The Moors that almost conquered Europe in the Middle Ages had their Gardens of Paradise. Even the Japs of today die fighting gladly in the belief they'll go straight to their own kind of heaven. So why shouldn't we have ours?"

No one in the group said anything immediately. Like the gunner, they were staring into a far distance, as if watching the unveiling of something there.

"What is it like—this place?" someone asked haltingly.

"I can't say exactly." The gunner's response was slow and meditative. "But it's a place where the sky is always clear and bright, with visibility good even at the highest altitudes. The wind always blows from the right direction, and there aren't any pesty air currents or bumps. It's a place where airmen can fly around as free as they please, with no brass-hats to tell them what to do or how they're supposed to do it, with no worries of any Hun jumping on their tail or diving down at them from out of the sun. They'll have wings, of course. But," he added quickly, "there won't be any of this harp and halo stuff. And—" The gunner broke off suddenly, peering at his listeners in suspicion.

But they neither laughed nor spoke. They were very still, looking at something far away.

The gunner experienced a feeling of mystic wonder. It was somehow as if he had momentarily been invested with the powers of a god and had given life to a new creation, to stand, now, at once delighted and dismayed at the result of his handiwork. He realized abruptly that these gullible youngsters *believed*. Each and every one of them believed.

And why not? he thought. He knew suddenly that he had believed all along himself. He hadn't really intended to fool them. He had just wanted urgently to tell someone—

* * *

AVIARA!

The magic word spread the length and breadth of England. It traveled to every other place where Allied airmen were to be found—Africa, the Solomons, Alaska, the Philippines, the Hawaiians, and even aircraft carriers far out at sea.

The war was one in which the airplane reigned supreme. Battles were won or lost depending on the number and quality of aircraft in each engagement. But these were not the only important factors. Morale was another and, in many ways, a greater one. The legend of Aviara supplied this latter in astonishing amount, and though it probably won't ever be attributed entirely to the rapid and conclusive Allied successes, it nevertheless played an important role.

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Legends and myths arise out of Man's attempts to explain the otherwise inexplicable. But more often they fill a real spiritual need. They can make the mysteries of this world natural and understandable, and they can remove the veil of the great unknown which lies beyond. Thus, if you believe, death becomes an insignificant thing, no more to be feared than passing into a deep sleep in which dreams are certain to be pleasant.

It was this consolation which Rand Howell felt as he flew his P-38 one night, deep over Nazi Germany. He was part of a tiny bombing fleet which included three B-17's and two Hurricanes. Their mission was one which amounted to nothing more or less than a suicide flight, but Rand Howell didn't feel particularly concerned. Like almost all other airmen, he believed explicitly in the legend of Aviara, and out of this belief he drew courage and strength. Death holds no terrors, if you believe.

From information gathered over a long period of months, Air Intelligence in London had come to the conclusion that Kleindorf, a small German town, harbored a long-sought munition supply center. Kleindorf connected with a railroad line, and observation flights had reported the line intensely active about that area.

Photographs taken at high altitudes and compared with older ones on file had shown certain portions of the town blotted out under what could be nothing else than camouflage. Moreover, anti-aircraft batteries had been found to be particularly concentrated around the town.

The Bomber Command felt it had enough upon which to act, and accordingly volunteers were asked for the raiding of Kleindorf. The raid might possibly be one of no return, for if the town were indeed the suspected munition supply center, the Nazis would have it heavily armed and well protected and would make every desperate attempt to keep it from being destroyed. But the sacrifice of a few men would be worth it, since destruction of the center would shorten the war by many months.

RAND HOWELL remembered his instructions clearly. He was to protect the bomber he was accompanying from intercepting enemy aircraft at all costs, until it had unloaded its cargo of bombs. After that, he was on his own, free to make his way back to England—if he were still alive and able.

It was a fine night for the mission. The Weather Bureau had designated it especially. It was very dark, for moon and stars were hidden behind great masses of low-lying clouds. Bombers and fighters flew high above these, with only occasional glimpses of the ground below.

Rand glanced at his instruments. It wouldn't be long now. He spotted a rift in the cloud-floor ahead, and glanced down as he passed it. The lights of a town glowed dimly below. He looked at his instruments again, and decided that would be Mitteldorf. Kleindorf was less than a dozen miles away, and at the speed they were flying, would be reached in a matter of seconds.

Then the half-expected occurred. Rand's earphones crackled with sudden sound.

"Up and at it, old chap. Enemy aircraft ahead."

And now Rand saw them. An enemy squadron approached, blacking out the stars one by one, their exhausts flaming redly. A moment later searchlights lit up on the ground below. The Nazis were swinging into defensive action.

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In unison with the two other fighters, Rand sent his ship into a steep climb for altitude. Then they nosed down in a sharp dive at the oncoming Nazi craft, which now became discernible as Messerschmitts. It was their intention to break up the enemy formation so that the gunners in the bombers would have a chance to help in beating off the attack.

Rand's face set grimly, doggedly. Death was a certainty, but he just had to hold it off for awhile—long enough, at least, for the bombers to complete their task.

And then the Messerschmitts were below him. He found his sights lined up on one of the leaders and pressed the firing button in his control stick automatically. Flaming tracers spat from his guns. He felt a cold exultation as he saw the ship upon which he had fired nose down and go spinning to the earth. Then his attention leaped to the other Messerschmitts further back in the formation.

He fired again, but couldn't see whether or not his shells had taken effect, for the Nazis were firing now also. He kicked the rudder sharply, banked, and came around in a swift curve.

RAND found himself almost on the tail of a Messerschmitt. He maneuvered quickly and got his sights lined up. But just then anti-aircraft batteries on the ground began firing at the bombers. His eyes were dazzled by exploding shells. The next thing he knew, two Nazi craft were hurtling at him, one from the front and one from the side, and tongues of flaming tracer were licking toward his cockpit.

It happened, then, in that moment of deadly danger. Rand's cool fighter's mind was seeking with lightning-like rapidity for some way out of the trap. But before he could act, his P-38 was shaken with a sudden, strange vibration. Something like an electric current ran through his body. It tingled along his nerves and made his teeth ache. Then the world about him seemed to explode in a silent flare of light.

Night sky and Nazi aircraft were gone. Rand found himself rushing through sunlight and white clouds. Bewildered, stunned, he peered quickly about him. The sky was blue, a soft, incredible blue. Of Messerschmitts, B-17's, and Hurricanes there was no sign. Except for the clouds, he was alone.

Rand was dazed and uncomprehending. He couldn't understand what had happened. One moment it was night and he was in the midst of a fierce battle. The next it was day, and battle and darkness alike were gone.

Thoughts gyrating chaotically, Rand banked and peered down at the ground below him. He found no trace of towns, roads, or railroad tracks, or any other of the indications of a civilized, heavily-populated section of country. There was nothing to be seen but forests and hills and broad meadows. To one side lay the silver thread of a small river, and far in the distance a range of mountains towered.

Rand brought his P-38 down closer to the ground and cut speed. He cruised slowly along, glancing around him with puzzled, wondering eyes. Long minutes passed while he searched, but he found nothing to tell him where he was, nor did his spinning mind produce even the slightest hint of an answer to the mystery.

His eyes narrowed with a sudden, chilling thought. What was to become of him here, in this strange world? His fuel wouldn't last forever, and sooner or later he'd have to land.

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Where would he find food and shelter—or, and most important, other human beings who might be able to help him? He wondered if there were human beings here.

And then something that was white and angular leaped out in vivid contrast to the green and gold of the vegetation below. An exclamation of joy burst from Rand's lips. It was a house!

RAND circled, peering at it eagerly. He revised the results of his first flash of discovery. It was a house, true enough, but a tiny one—a cottage. And something about it stirred memories that brought a catch to Rand's throat.

Abruptly, a slender figure appeared in the doorway of the little dwelling and stood looking upward, one hand raised to shade its eyes. Rand stared. Unless he was very badly mistaken, it was a girl. He felt a warm surge of relief. There were human beings here after all, and they were civilized as well, if the house was any evidence. Now he would be able to find out where he was, and if still possible, get back to help his comrades in their mission.

Rand looked about for a place where he could land his P-38. There was a small field a short distance from the house, and he brought the plane down upon it. Then, eagerly, he climbed from the cockpit and jumped to the ground.

He stiffened at the sound of beating wings. Was that a bird? He looked up and then gasped in shock and incredulity. A girl—no, *the* girl—floated toward him in the air on vibrating, white pinions! He watched in dazed fascination as she approached and finally settled to the ground a few yards away.

Rand felt shaken and numb. What sort of a place had he fallen into? What sort of a place could it be, where everyone flew about on great, shining wings? For a moment he thought he had the answer, but he rejected it almost immediately. No, this just couldn't be Aviara, for he knew that he was still very much alive. Those Nazi shells hadn't had time to reach his cockpit, and there wasn't a mark upon him.

Then where was he? Who was this girl?

He became suddenly aware of her. His perceptions narrowed upon her, then recoiled in stunned surprise, like light striking a reflecting surface.

"Madge!" he gasped. The name of the girl back in the States to whom he was engaged came involuntarily. But an instant later he realized that he had made a mistake. This wasn't Madge. There was a striking resemblance, to be sure, but that was as far as it went. This girl was poignantly lovely, whereas Madge was only pretty, in a calm, gracious way.

Basically, she was Madge, but she embodied a dozen odd little improvements that he had long wished Madge had had.

HER hair was blonde, as was Madge's, yet it was as he had always wanted it to be—a warm gold, instead of Madge's pale ash. Everything else about her was the same. Her brows were dark in striking contrast to her hair, and her eyes were a clear, limpid grey. Her nose was shorter, her lips full and rich. Her body, garbed in a brief, white kirtle which was caught about the waist by a silver cord, was sturdier, lithe, and firm. She was, in his eyes at least, the perfect woman.

Abruptly, he realized that he had never really loved Madge. He had thought he had, but that was only because she had come so near to being his ideal. He knew now that no man who is dissatisfied with a woman in a num-

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ber of little ways can ever really love her. There can be understanding and companionship, yes, but none of the thrilling pleasure and satisfaction that comes with the knowledge that she is his picture of perfection come to life.

The mist of thought faded from Rand's vision. The girl before him leaped once more into clarity. He saw that she was smiling in a shy, half-puzzled way. And then she spoke.

"Hello, Rand," she said, and her voice was sweet and soft. "Welcome to Aviara."

The confusion of Rand's mind had settled somewhat. But now, like a wind stirring leaves which had almost come to rest, her words started his thoughts whirling again.

Then it was true! He *was* in Aviara! But—but it was somehow wrong. He hadn't died. He knew he wasn't dead now.

And his name. She had been expecting him!

Rand's winged ideal extended a perfect, rounded arm.

"Come," she invited. "Let me show you that which has been prepared against your arrival."

Mechanically, Rand stepped forward to take the small hand held out to him. He saw it come to rest within his, but disappointment swept through him as he felt no sensation of contact or weight. It was strangely impalpable—unreal, as though she were a vision which he could see and hear but could not touch.

He saw her gray eyes darken, as if with the same disappointment which he felt himself. But her red lips parted in a smile.

"You have no wings," she said, "and so we shall have to walk. But it is not far."

"Am I supposed to have—wings?" Rand inquired hesitantly.

The girl looked up at him, her eyes solemn and still dark. "It is usual," she answered. Abruptly the limpid grey of her gaze returned. "But perhaps there has been a change. Yes—it must be so."

"A change? Do you mean that conditions here are not quite constant?"

"Yes. You see, Aviara is still very new, and with continuous additions of those who believe come many changes. Everyone has his own idea of how things should be, and these must be satisfied. But stability will come eventually."

RAND clutched eagerly at the bit of hope which the girl presented. A change—there must have been. He wanted so desperately to believe. But he glanced again at the small hand lying so unsubstantially within his, and, bitterly, he knew this wasn't the answer.

He had an unyielding sense of strangeness, unreality, as though he lived in a dream. He felt that he might wake at any moment and find himself on his cot in barracks. But there was a glaring inconsistency. He *had* taken off in his P-38. He *had* accompanied the bombers deep into Germany. They *had* been attacked by an intercepting squadron of Messerschmitts. That part of it could not be a dream.

Perhaps, he thought speculatively, he had been struck by a chance fragment of metal and all this was taking place in his unconscious mind in much the same manner that the events of a past life rush by in the mind of a drowning man. But the vibration, the brief pain, the flare of light—he could remember no other sensations than these. And the grass, firm and crisp beneath his feet, the breeze that blew warm and fragrant against his face and hands—these were very real. It was the intangibility of his lovely compan-

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ion that disturbed him, he realized.

Rand glanced at the girl. She glided silently at his side, her exquisite legs moving with easy grace. Her gleaming wings were folded compactly against the back of her brief kirtle, and her small face was pensive.

"What is your name?" he asked abruptly.

The girl turned to look at him, her grey eyes widened with surprise. "Why, Madge, of course," she replied.

"But you aren't Madge!" Rand burst out involuntarily. The next instant he wished that he had slapped himself instead of having said the words.

The girl stopped abruptly, her features stricken and hurt. "But—but that is what I have been told. If you wish it otherwise, that can be arranged."

"No!" Rand said quickly. "Please don't misunderstand. You see, I know a girl by the name of Madge, but you're so much different that I had expected you to have an entirely different name also. I don't want you to feel that I was denying that you are the person you claim to be."

"I see. But when I was told that I was Madge, it was thought that this was as you would have wanted it."

"Told? Who told you?"

Her golden head shook vaguely. "I was just—told."

RAND decided not to pursue the matter further. He knew that she had been hurt deeply by his thoughtlessness, and he had an aching sense of contrition. He wanted desperately to make amends.

"Look," he began. "I'm terribly sorry for having made you feel bad about this. I'll be very glad to call you Madge, if you've been told that was your name."

The girl smiled wanly. "But won't that be in conflict with your memories of—of this other Madge?"

"Why, no—" He was a little surprised to find that the admission was true. Memory of the Madge to whom he was engaged had paled in almost two years of war, and this new, different Madge had eclipsed it in shadow.

"Do you not love her, then?" the girl asked, half eagerly, half shy.

Rand shook his head. "No—not in the way you probably mean. I grew up with her, you see, and she was a friend and a sister all in one. It's hard to part from friends you've known most of your life, and so I sort of mistook this reluctance for love. We became engaged, but since then I've found out that I don't love her the way a man should love the girl he is going to marry. I had a different girl in mind. Someone —someone like you."

This last left him in a sudden rush. He had a momentary sense of confusion. He passed a swift glance at the girl, and was amazed to see her face covered with a rosy glow.

They walked on in silence. For the first time Rand became conscious of his surroundings. From the air the place had seemed a wilderness, but now he saw there was a certain order and arrangement to it, like a vast and wonderful park. And except for its size and its lack of the various eyesores of civilization, it was not much different from the many other parks he had known. Trees, flowers, and shrubs were kinds which he had long been familiar, as were the birds, bees, and butterflies. There were squirrels, too, bold, saucy little creatures who regarded him with bright, black eyes.

A great peace and calm seemed to emanate from the place. Rand felt it like a comforting blanket of warmth. But there was no responding mood within him. He was unable to shake

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himself free of the feeling that he didn't belong.

They rounded a group of trees, and Rand suddenly found himself gazing at the cottage a short distance away. Once again sight of it brought a catch to his throat. It was the very kind of cottage which he had long dreamed of sharing with the girl he would marry. And it was just as he had mentally planned it would be. Every line and detail was there, from the green shutters on the windows, to the flagstone path leading to the door.

Looking at the cottage made something ache within Rand. It was as though it spoke to him, telling him, in a silent, little voice, that it needed just his touch to make it perfect. It was so new and somehow so unfinished. He could see a dozen odd little things that needed to be done.

THE girl beside him suddenly spoke. "Do you like it?" she asked, watching his face.

"Like it? Why, it's ideal! It's just the sort of house I'd always dreamed of having some day. And it needs just the sort of things I've always wanted to do on a house of my own." Rand pointed eagerly. "Look—I could plant hedges around the front, shrubs there, and flowers over there. And I could start ivy vines growing around the windows and the door, and—" He broke off abruptly, and his hand fell listlessly to his side. He felt foolish and futile. The inescapable feeling that he didn't belong here rose to mock him.

He looked hopelessly at the girl, and her eyes fell sadly before his. Something vital between them, too, was lacking.

"Come," she said. "Let us go in."

A protest rose to his lips. What good would it do? This was not for him. Yet he followed the graceful figure of the girl as she started up the flagstone path. Some fascination seemed to draw him on against his will.

Inside it was the same. His mental planning had not gone as far as interior decorations, but the furnishings were as he would have chosen them himself. And again he found signs of uncompletedness, as though things within the house also awaited his touch. The furniture was not arranged, and the pictures were not yet hung. He reached out to pull a chair into place, but his fingers passed through the arm as though it were nothing more substantial than shadow. He shrugged forlornly and went on.

One of the rooms had been set aside as a den, and here he found pipes, slippers, and his favorite brand of tobacco. The walls were lined with books, all on his favorite subjects. Another room was fitted out as a workshop. There were tools and materials here for all the things a man loves to do. Rand's fingers ached to touch them, but he did not dare. They were not for him.

Rand had no wish to look further. Heavily he led the way outside. He had a feeling of dejection so deep that it amounted almost to grief.

Rand pulled off his helmet and stood looking dully at the stones of the path. He looked up as the girl came to stand beside him.

"What is wrong?" she asked gently. "You are not happy. Do you not like Aviara?"

"Of course I do," he answered quickly. "I think it's a wonderful place. But don't you see? I don't belong here."

The girl's dark brows drew together in bewilderment.

"But if you believe, you must belong." Of a sudden her hand crept to her white throat. "Can it be that—

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that you don't believe?"

"I do—I always have. You don't understand. "It's just that I'm not supposed to be here yet. I'm not—that is, I haven't died yet."

"Oh!" The sound was like a moan. Her golden head bent until her face was hidden from him.

RAND felt the poignant desire to take her into his arms, or at least even to touch her. But he knew this could not be. He looked miserably at the helmet which he twisted about in his hands.

Finally he glanced up

"Madge, what am I going to do? I can't stay here. I've got to go back. This world isn't real to me, and I'm needed in mine."

Abruptly the girl held up a hand, her golden head turned to one side as though listening.

"You've been heard, Rand," she explained. "Wait."

He watched her wonderingly. And then he looked around him, startled by the sudden realization of a change in his surroundings. The music of the birds and bees was gone. The breeze no longer blew against his face and hands, filling his nostrils with fragrance. The sunlight was dimmed, its radiance as pale as though seen through fog. Even the outlines of the girl had become indistinct.

Rand felt that a veil had dropped between him and Aviara. His former sense of unreality swept back upon him in a rush. Awed and uncomprehending, he stood there. It was as if he were isolated in a void. Once he seemed to hear a burst of glorious music from far away, but it went too quickly for him to be sure.

The girl stood motionless, listening to something which Rand couldn't hear. Her grey eyes were very wide, her small face intent. And then her hands crept to her cheeks, and her face bent slowly to her breast.

Sounds drifted back to Rand's ears, but the strange vagueness of the world around him persisted. Then the girl looked at him, her eyes filled with tears.

"Madge—what is it?" he asked in bewildered concern. "What happened?"

"I have been spoken to," she replied dully. "You are free to go back, Rand."

"I see." His gaze dropped once more to the helmet in his hands. The knowledge that he could return brought no answering surge of joy within him. He didn't really want to go back, but there was nothing else that he could do. Aviara was not yet for him, and he still had a duty to perform. The mission hadn't been finished, and his comrades doubtlessly needed him badly.

"A mistake has been made, as you must have realized," the girl continued. "It was foreknown that you were to die on the bombing mission. The exact way of your death and the very moment were foreknown also—just at the instant that the two enemy aircraft converged upon you. But you were brought here seconds too soon.

"Now you must go back. These words 'war, enemy, and death' are not to be used in Aviara, and I have been told that your presence here, alive, has already created grave disturbances."

RAND hesitated in the act of turning. There was something that he wanted to say very badly.

"Madge," he began falteringly, "I—I hope you won't be hurt too much over this. We were made for each other—and I don't want you to feel that there was a mistake in this, too. Please believe me, dear—I do love you."

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"And I love you," she whispered. "This is as was meant to be, Rand."

Instinctively, yearningly, he reached out for her. But he remembered and let his arms drop back limply to his sides. "I'll be back, Madge," he declared suddenly. "It's sure death back there. I've no chance of pulling through safely."

The girl shook her head mournfully. "It is not likely that you'll be back."

"Why—what do you mean? Won't I be allowed to return here?"

"Aviara will always be here for those who believe, Rand."

"But, Madge, then why—"

"I shall explain what I was told. You see, for most men, at any given time in the war, there is always more than one certainty of death. But for some, at certain times, there is one—and only one. If they escape this one, they will be in no further danger until the next time.

"Your mission, for you, was one of those times. Only one way of death was seen for you—that by the two enemy aircraft. When you return now, you will be forewarned and forearmed—and you will escape. Thus you will be in no further danger from your enemies, until the next time, of course. But, Rand, it is foreseen that your mission will mean the hastening of the end of the war. It will be successful, and so there will be no next time for you."

Rand stared at her, stunned. He didn't know whether to be dismayed or glad. For one thing, the mission *would* be successful. The war *would* be over sooner. But it meant also that return to Aviara was virtually closed to him. A sudden idea struck him.

"Madge—I know what I can do!"

The golden head nodded slowly, sadly. "I know what you are thinking, Rand. It will not work. Mere suicide will avail you nothing. Remember—Aviara is here only for those who believe. But more important, it is here—only for those who die in the line of duty."

Rand felt frustrated, trapped. "But, Madge, what in the world can I do, then?"

THE girl's slender shoulders lifted in a hopeless shrug. She bit her lips, but slow tears welled from her eyes.

"Look," Rand pursued doggedly. "You and Aviara will always be here—as long as I believe?"

"Yes, Rand."

"Then suppose I got a job as a passenger or freight pilot after the war. Suppose I died in the line of duty. Would I still be able to return here?"

"Yes, Rand," she responded again.

"Then I'll do that, dear. And you'll wait, won't you? A few years more or less in Aviara can't make much difference."

"I'll wait." Suddenly her gaze dropped. "But suppose you are unable to find that kind of a job, Rand. Suppose you become a businessman, instead. In your world the years bring forgetfulness, Rand. Memory of Aviara and myself will dim, even as memory of the other Madge has already dimmed within you. What, then, if you became gradually to believe in a businessman's paradise?"

"That won't happen!" he protested. "I won't let it happen." Abruptly, he broke off, staring about him. The world, already dim and grey, had begun to darken. Distant vistas were vanishing behind a rising tide of night. Nearer objects were becoming shadowy and vague. The trees writhed like smoke columns in a breeze, and the figure of Madge was only a pale blur before his eyes. Her voice reached him as though from far away.

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"Rand—dearest—goodbye—"

And then Rand saw his P-38 before him. His ears were filled with a rushing and a rumble like thunder. Thick, ebon clouds boiled around him. Of Madge or the cottage there was nothing more to be seen.

He pulled on his helmet and vaulted into the cockpit. He turned on the ignition, then jerked the throttle. The engines thundered into life, and the propeller began turning over. Once again thunder rumbled. A swift wind sprang up and began keening past the plane. Rand felt his P-38 moving, rolling, then lifting.

There was another rumble of thunder over the rushing of the wind. Once again Rand felt the vibration shake the P-38. Again something that was like an electric current ran through his body. And then, abruptly, the last vestige of Aviara was gone. He was back in the battle, and the world was one of stabbing searchlights and exploding anti-aircraft shells, and the drone of airplane engines mingled wildly with the rattle of machine guns. Two Nazi Messerschmitts were hurtling at him, one from the front and one from the side, and tongues of flaming tracer were licking toward his cockpit.

RAND recognized the situation instantly. And now he knew just what to do. He side-slipped—and the bullets punched harmless holes in his wing. Then he jerked around in a swift curve and came up and under the belly of a Messerschmitt whose tail had previously attracted him. He fired a short burst, and the Nazi craft lurched drunkenly and nosed down.

In a continuation of his curve, Rand slid into a tight inside loop. As he came out of it, he caught one of his two attackers squarely in his sights. He fired with automatic reaction, and sudden flame boiled from the Messerschmitt's engine. The other leaped at him vengefully, but before he could act, converging lines of tracer bit into it, and a moment later a Hurricane streaked across his vision. The Nazi craft, riddled vitally, began twisting and turning to its death crash on the ground far below.

Rand looked around for the other Hurricane, but it was gone. He decided that anti-aircraft fire or machine-gun bullets must have gotten it. The one that had come to his rescue, however, was streaking back toward the badly besieged bombers, and Rand followed it.

Just then the Nazi anti-aircraft fire made a direct hit on one of the bombers. Its deadly cargo exploded with terrific violence, spewing fragments of metal across the sky. Rand was blinded and deafened, and he lost control of his P-38 under the force of the awful concussion. Grimly, he fought the plane back on an even keel. Then, as vision crept back into his eyes, he looked about him.

He became fiercely exultant. The Nazis had defeated their own purpose. The bomber had been suffering under the attack of an especially large number of Messerschmitts, and its explosion had knocked almost all the remaining number of intercepting enemy craft out of the sky.

THE farthermost of the two surviving bombers was directly over the blacked out town. Now it began unloading its cargo. There came the familiar bursts of light with their accompanying explosions. Here and there on the ground below fires began burning.

The Hurricane was battling savagely against three remaining Messerschmitts. As Rand came to its rescue, it got one. An instant later, however, it

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fell in flames itself. The two surviving Nazi craft disregarded Rand and went after the bomber that was dropping its deadly load upon the town. But it had been fatally disabled, completing its mission while in the throes of death. Even as the Messerschmitts began firing into it, it turned over and began falling.

Rand hurled his P-38 after the two remaining Nazi craft. Only one bomber was left. He was grimly, stubbornly determined that it should be able to finish its task.

Never had he fought as intently or as well. He employed every cunning trick which he had learned in more than two years of war. His consciousness merged with his plane, until the machine and himself were as one, and every roll, loop, and turn was made as though with his own bodily members. Time and place lost all meaning for him.

And then he got one of the two Messerschmitts squarely in his sights. His guns spat leaden doom, and the Nazi craft, a lifeless shell, began hurtling earthward.

Only one more remained now. Rand looked around for it eagerly. Abruptly, his breath caught in his throat.

The lone bomber was directly over the town below. Its bombs couldn't miss, for the town was a beautiful target, outlined as it was in flames. Every bomb was certain to hit a vital spot.

But arrowing at it was the sole surviving Messerschmitt. It wasn't firing at the bomber, for its guns were either jammed or out of ammunition. It was hurtling straight at the bomber with one very obvious intent—to ram it.

RAND sent his P-38 streaking forward. Desperately, he forced out every last bit of speed and power which the craft possessed. He knew that the only hope of accomplishing the mission successfully rested upon that last bomber. He knew, too, that merely firing at the Messerschmitt wouldn't deflect it from its set and deadly course. There was only one thing to do.

Eagerly, gladly, Rand did it. In that final moment he remembered what Madge had told him. Only one way of death had been seen for him—*from his enemies*. Anything that had not directly menaced him had apparently been overlooked. But he was going to die just the same. And it would take place quite in the line of duty. He was going to sacrifice himself so that last bomber could finish its task.

Triumph coursing vibrantly through him, Rand sent his P-38 crashing into the Messerschmitt. There was a brief instant of shock and pain, and then he was soaring up and up on great, white wings—up and into an ever brightening sky.

Faintly and from far away, he seemed to hear a roar of sound that could only have come from an exploding munition works. Then a sudden swelling of exquisite music rose over it, burst after ecstatic burst. And on its strains, as though on a breeze, Rand floated down to that tiny cottage in the grove, where so many things awaited his doing.

THE END

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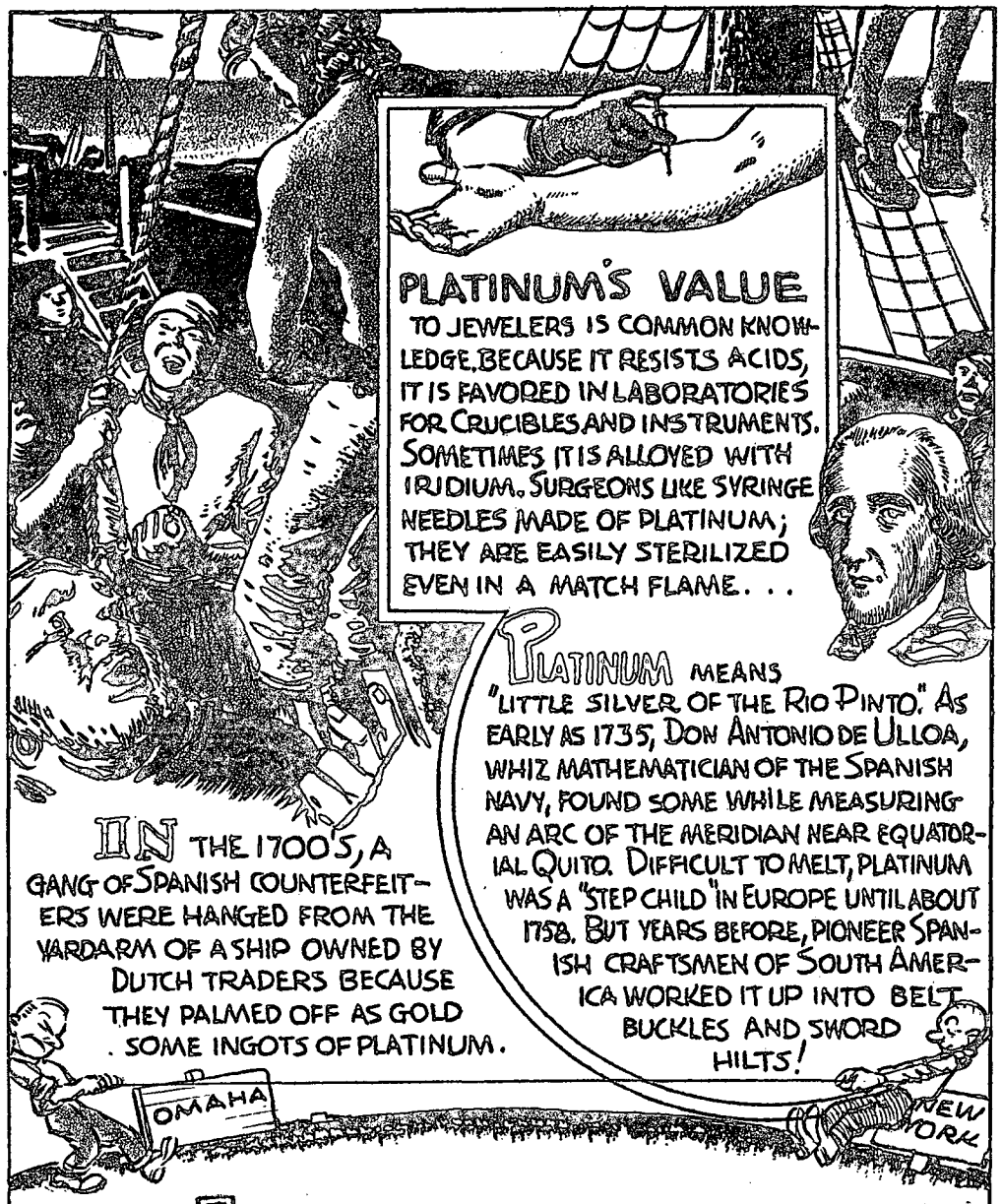
ROMANCE OF THE ELEMENTS—PLATINUM



THEY CAN DRAW A SINGLE OUNCE OF PLATINUM INTO WIRE LONG ENOUGH TO STRETCH FROM OMAHA TO NEW YORK.

PLATINUM is number 78 in the International Table of Atomic Weights. Its symbol is Pt and its atomic weight is 195.23. It is one of the most malleable and ductile of metals and it can be welded at white-heat. It is a good conductor of electricity, and is of vital importance in delicate war machines and aircraft. It has almost the same coefficient of expansion as glass. It is widely used in industry as a catalyst, and is used to harden the more soft noble metals, such as gold and copper. It is one of the six "precious" metals.

(Next Month: The Romance of Radium)

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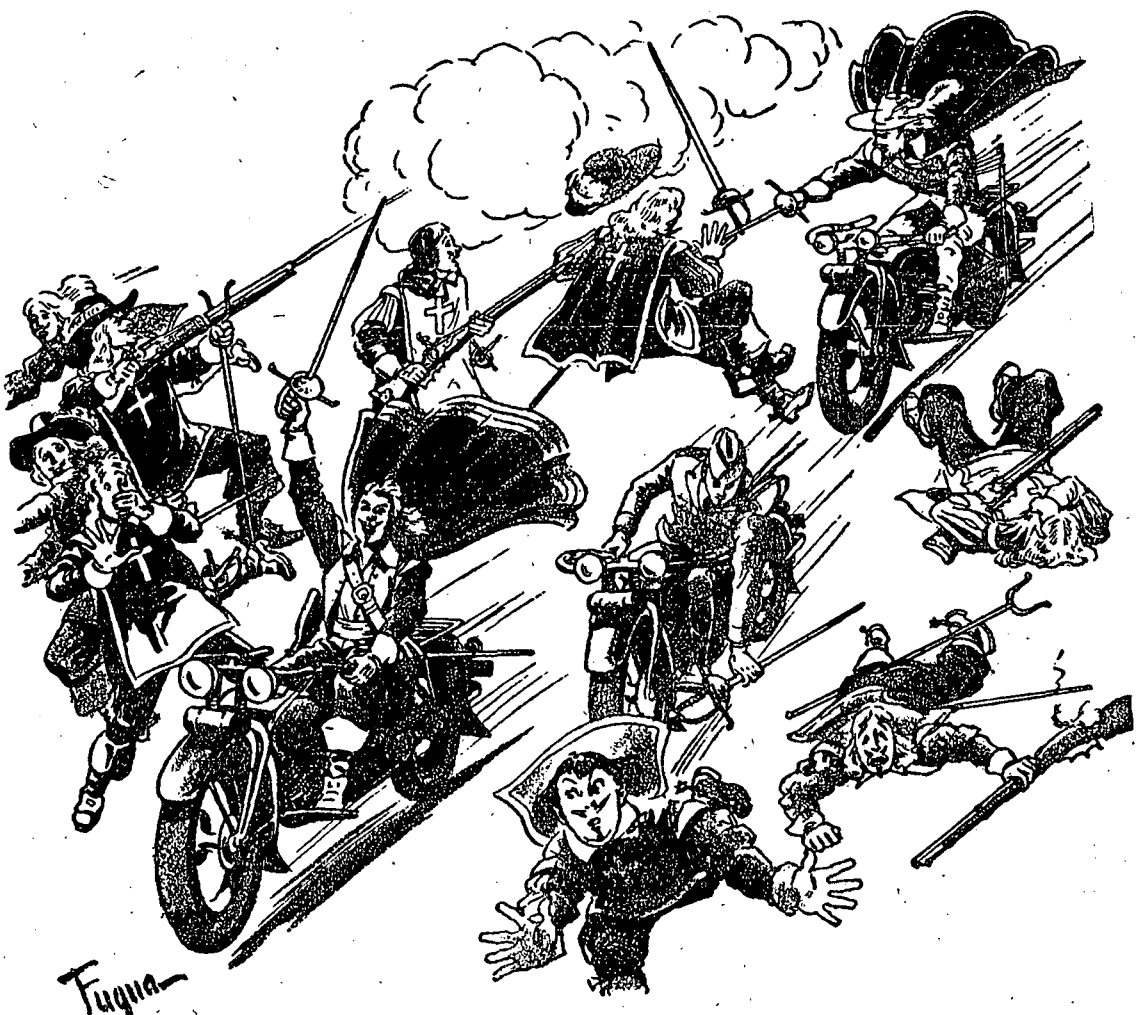
CAVERNS of TIME

Time got mixed up in this cave and the three musketeers found new uses for their incredibly clever blades, thereby adding an unscheduled chapter to history



The roar of motorcycles spread a wave of superstitious terror

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By CARLOS McCUNE

CLIVE nosed the truck over the brow of the ridge and rapidly shifted up through the gears as it gained momentum on the down-grade. He didn't like the ridge, it was too steep and too crooked, and worse, there were too many timid tourists hugging the inside on blind curves. In their present state the brakes on this small truck were ridiculously inadequate for the relatively heavy load of twelve hundred gallons of gasoline that filled the tank. Clive didn't know why he took such chances when there was an even chance of "piling up," but unconsciously the thrill of uncertainty was his only incentive for staying on this truck-driving job the four months of the year that he was not studying medicine.

The tanker continued to pick up speed, while Clive gave it all the brake he had on his approach to curves that couldn't be negotiated otherwise. Ten miles of this slope and he was preparing to congratulate himself upon the successful descent, as was his custom, when he saw something that instantly tensed all of the muscles in his body. He grabbed the hand-brake, at the same time slamming the foot-brake pedal to the floor-boards, finally coming to a stop.

"Clive, you're wacky," he muttered; "you're asleep and you don't know it."

From past experience he knew there was only one treatment for sleepiness. He leaned over the steering-wheel and closed his eyes. He was just dozing off when he was startled nearly through the windshield by a terrific din. Quickly composing himself he scrambled out of the cab, making his way toward the rear of the truck—sure that he would find another car smashed into the rear of the tanker. He had barely taken two steps, however, when the sound of voices

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caused him to stop dead in his tracks. The voices were speaking in a foreign tongue—French. Clive immediately recognized it for he had studied this language for three years in his undergraduate days.

"Well Messieurs, what do you make of it?" One voice was saying.

"Strike it again, d'Artagnan, perhaps we can rouse some creature from within." This speaker's voice was boisterously loud.

"I am afraid, Messieurs, that after the mad dash we have just witnessed we will find no living creature in this strange vehicle. It is a miracle that it stopped before dashing itself to pieces against the rocks you see ahead." This voice had an air of quiet dignity, that immediately commanded Clive's respect.

"Then it wasn't a dream," Clive murmured: "Or it was and I am still dreaming." His eyes wandered to the deep, transparent blue of the sky, and to the eagle that was scarcely violating its solitude, floating about on motionless wings. The sun beat down mercilessly, but paradoxically a cool breeze was blowing down through the canyon to the right, as it always did about this time of day. Clive inhaled deeply this refreshing draught. "I can't possibly be asleep," he thought; "everything is too real." He again turned his attention to the voices on the other side of the truck.

"Athos is right, but perhaps the coachman was spared by the same providence that saved the coach," said a fourth voice.

"Mordieu!" The second voice was even more boisterous than before: "What kind of providence would spare a coachman that would lose his horses on such a grade?"

Clive could contain himself no longer, dream or no dream, he was going to enjoy the situation to the fullest. He walked boldly around the truck, and addressed the strange company:

"I have the horses safely under lock and key, friends, all 85 of them, and so if you will climb back on your respective mounts, and ride back to the booby hatch, or the circus, or wherever you belong I'll skin this wagon on into town."

THE four men he addressed were indeed a strange sight—small wonder that Clive suspected himself of dreaming. They wore long cloaks—much too warm for this near-desert climate—and large felt hats with flowing plumes. They wore high leather boots reaching above their knees, and each carried a long straight sword at his side. The mounts were as remarkable as the riders. In this country of cow-boys and horses Clive had never seen horse furnishings such as these noble animals carried—a combination of leather, steel, silver, and velvet—very impractical, but having a very business-like appearance.

Though they rode almost identical mounts, and dressed similarly, the four men certainly were not drawn together by any personal similarity. One was rather short and stocky, having prominent cheek-bones, and a swarthy complexion. "D'Artagnan," was the thought that flashed through Clive's mind, for he was the exact picture of the hero of Clive's life-long favorite novel. A second was, in contrast, a veritable giant. A shock of light hair hung to his shoulders, framing a flushed face which bore a rather blank expression. "Porthos," this one registered. A third gave the impression of effeminate elegance, an impression that was belied by the cold glitter in his eye. "Aramis," thought Clive. Fourth was the most commanding figure of the group. Tall and handsome, this man embodied all

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the qualities commonly ascribed to aristocracy. This could only be Athos.

Clive felt embarrassed the moment he had made this rude speech. "After all," he thought, "they are probably members of one of the motion picture companies that film many of their scenes in this country." This embarrassment lasted only a moment, however, quickly changing to a feeling of concern, for as soon as the strangers had recovered from the first surprise their swords flashed menacingly in their hands, and "d'Artagnan" cried:

"It's an English dog, let me have the pleasure, Messieurs, of spitting him on my sword."

Clive would not have been surprised if they had vanished in thin air, but events had taken an unsuspected turn with rather startling effects. He turned and fled toward the cab of the tanker. The motor roared obligingly at a flick of the starter button, and the truck moved out upon the highway. He stopped the truck again on the top of a small knoll about one hundred yards distant, for a glance at the rear-view mirror had assured him he was no longer in danger of being perforated by this maniac's sword—Clive was sure now that the strangers were escaped inmates of an asylum, or almost sure —the noble bearing of "Athos" made him wonder.

Climbing to the top of the tank in order to get a better view, Clive looked back upon a scene of confusion. The horses, evidently startled by the roar of the truck motor were streaking across a nearby ridge, while the strangers who had tried in vain to stop them were watching them disappear in apparent dismay. When finally convinced that the horses would neither stop nor return, the four again turned their attention to the tanker, and after a hasty conference started walking up the hill to where Clive was now seated cross-legged on top of the tank. Clive had by this time overcome his momentary fear, and felt only amusement as he saw his would-be persecutors approach slowly—panting and perspiring under the weight of the heavy, warm clothes they were wearing. When they arrived within hailing distance, Clive called out to them, this time in French:

"Stay where you are, Messieurs, or leave your arms there, otherwise you shall have a twenty-mile walk to the next town."

THE strangers held another hasty conference, and Clive saw Athos hand his sword to d'Artagnan, and approach alone.

"Monsieur, I am afraid you have bested us on our first encounter; bested by your noise, if not by your remarkable display of courage."

Clive flushed crimson, but then thought of the cause of his awkward retreat.

"It does take a brave man to draw a sword on an unarmed man, and since there are four of you I'd say your courage was almost foolhardy."

Now Athos flushed. Clive climbed down to the ground, and stood before this aristocratic figure. "If your friends will promise to behave themselves I'll take you all on to St. George, where you can put up at a hotel for the night. Your horses will turn up at some ranch by morning, and we can get the sheriff to keep us posted."

By this time Athos had regained his composure, he said: "Accept my sincere apologies, I see that I am dealing with a gentleman, although you are clothed as a peasant. Your speech tells me that you are an Englishman, therefore a spy. We can not ride with you since you obviously have no horses for your strange carriage. Amiens is scarcely

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over a league from here, and since we are in a hurry we shall walk back there and buy new horses."

"Amiens? I have never heard of that town around here," said Clive. "Of course I may be wrong, and you're not kidding about wanting to buy horses; if so you'll have a better chance of getting them in St. George than out here in the hills. Your best bet is to climb in with me and let me take you on in to town." Clive was beginning to wonder how long these fellows were going to keep up the bluff. Amiens, anyone would know that was a French city, six thousand miles away.

Athos considered for a moment, he gazed at the cloudless sky and wiped the perspiration from his brow with a lace handkerchief which he produced from somewhere. He gave most of his attention to the truck, however, and seemed very much perplexed with this strange vehicle.

"It did start, and carry itself to the top of this hill," he said, as though to himself. "We are not expected in Paris for two days, and perhaps the adventure will be worth the delay." Turning, he signalled for the others to approach, and when they came within speaking distance he said, "Put down your arms Messieurs, we are dealing with a gentleman from whom we are about to receive a favor."

The three exchanged knowing glances, and sheathed their swords. Porthos dragged his hat off and mopped industriously at the copious stream of perspiration, that was welling forth from his brow, with a handkerchief that greatly resembled a lace curtain. Aramis patted lightly with a much more dainty piece of lace, while d'Artagnan walked coolly ahead, as though there were no such thing as temperature discomfort.

"A gentleman indeed," grumbled Porthos; "he would make a much better companion for our lackeys."

"Ah yes," replied d'Artagnan; "but he has a very interesting sort of carriage, it's noisier than the fishmonger's market, and it will go up hill without horses."

"I would say it is possessed of the devil, if he is not the devil himself. What say you, Monsieur l'Abbe?" asked Porthos, turning to Aramis.

"Perhaps," answered Aramis. "If so, we should cultivate him, for who would be better to deal with Monsieur le Cardinal!"

"Bravo!" cried Porthos and d'Artagnan. Athos smiled in his noble manner, while Clive although smiling was rather annoyed by their continued pretense.

"All kidding aside, fellows where is your location?" Clive asked this question in English. The four looked questioningly at each other, and Athos spoke with ill disguised impatience:

"Monsieur, we do not understand the English tongue, and since you do speak our language, after a fashion, you will please do us the courtesy of addressing us in French." This was somewhat of a set-back, but Clive was determined to get to the bottom of what he decided was a first-rate mystery, and so proceeded to humor them. He repeated his question, this time in French.

THE strangers showed immediate signs of anger, reaching for their swords again. Athos restrained them, and Porthos, whose face had become a deep crimson from the heat of the sun, fairly exploded.

"Mordieu!" he exclaimed, "this fellow is indeed a fool to even suggest that we betray military information to an Englishman."

"I have no reference to the French army, I am speaking of motion pictures." This statement fell like a blow

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upon the four men. They stood transfixed. The color streamed from Porthos' face until it faded to a rosy pink color. Finally d'Artagnan spoke.

"Monsieur, you say 'pictures'. Are we to understand then that there are more than one?"

"You have them, perhaps?" asked Aramis.

"It is plain that he has them, or he would not have mentioned them," said Athos; "it is, therefore, our duty to see that he arrives safely in Paris."

To say that Clive was surprised at the turn events had taken would be a gross understatement. He made a feeble attempt to correct the misunderstanding, but was rewarded only by bland smiles from the four.

"You need not fear, Monsieur, you are among friends," said Aramis.

Clive tried another approach. "You said that Amiens is scarcely over a league from here, what road do you take to get there?"

"Road indeed! The trail is scarcely more than a dry stream bed—that one," Porthos said, pointing down the road to the point where the truck had first stopped. Clive could see a small gully with a fairly wide, dry stream bed, that quickly lost itself in the surrounding hills. Dry washes were very common in this country, but Clive was very much surprised when he saw this one dry for it had been the one stream that had consistently been "wet" in all his experience in this country. In fact, Clive had fished in that stream not more than two weeks before.

"Yes it is very odd," said d'Artagnan, "since on the other side of the cavern the trail is well marked, while on this side we appear to have been the only travelers. And now we come to this road, the like of which I have never seen in France."

"There is one more question I would like to ask you," said Clive. "What was the date when you left Amiens?"

"Why it was this morning," d'Artagnan answered, "the sixth of July, 1628!"

"Look!" cried Porthos. "Water!" The others followed his gaze, and saw that a stream of water was now flowing down the gully that a few minutes before had been a dry wash.

"Messieurs," said Clive. The others turned toward the speaker. "Prepare yourselves for a shock. Since you left Amiens 'this morning' you have come over five thousand miles, and covered a period of three hundred and twelve years!"

THE four strangers looked at him first in amazement, then they burst into laughter.

"Monsieur is either mad, or is trying to be very clever," said Athos.

"I don't blame you for thinking so," said Clive; "but frankly, I had the same impression of you gentlemen until just now. I can't explain how you did it, but I can prove to you that this is not the year 1628. If you will follow me I'll show you that what I say is the truth." He led them to the front of the truck and showed them the license plate. "You see, this is Utah, 1940. Utah is in the Rocky Mountains in the United States of America. Did you ever see a truck like this before? You just said you had never seen a road like this in France—it would be very impractical to drive horses over such a surface. And did you ever see such mountains as these in northern France?" The four men were thunderstricken. "You had better come with me now," Clive continued. "If there is a way back we will find it in the morning."

"We must find it now," said Athos; "the reputation of the Queen, as well

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as the fate of France, is at stake." He turned and started back down the road, the others swung in alongside, and all four marched toward the stream. As Clive watched them depart a sudden longing for adventure swept over him —story book adventure, as this obviously was.

"Wait!" he cried. "Let me go with you." The four men stopped momentarily, and in that moment a motorcycle roared over the knoll, and straight toward them. The appearance of this "monster" was so sudden that the musketeers had barely drawn their swords when it dodged between them and passed on up the road at full speed. They had seen a man astride the vehicle, and they now stood staring after it as it disappeared over the next hill.

"This is truly a land of devils," said Porthos.

"What manner of contraption was that which just passed down the road?" d'Artagnan asked Clive, who had by this time caught up with the others.

"That was a motorcycle," he answered. "It has the same kind of power as that which runs my truck. These machines are quite handy for getting around the country with one man."

"Indeed!"

"If you gentlemen will wait until I pull my truck off the road, I would like to tag along with you, at least as far as the cavern you spoke about." They waited, and when Clive returned they continued toward the stream.

They followed along the banks of the stream until the banks became so precipitous that they had to take to the water and continue their journey wading up stream. This was not such a great difficulty since the stream was fairly shallow, and unlike most mountain streams the bed was covered with coarse gravel rather than large rocks and boulders. Rounding a bend in the stream the five men found themselves in a box canyon, the sides of which were formed by perpendicular ledges, while a twenty-foot high waterfall closed the opposite end. Clive recognized the spot, for he had fished many times at the foot of that water-fall.

"Excuse me for asking," he remarked; "but could we by any chance be up the wrong gulch?" Clive was again being troubled with doubts as to the mental stability of his companions. He was even beginning to feel ashamed of himself for his gullibility.

The musketeers, on the other hand, showed genuine consternation at the absence of the cavern.

"There is still one possibility," said d'Artagnan; "the cavern may lie behind the waterfall—although the appearance of the place has changed entirely." He strode forward and as he neared the falls the water became deeper so that he had to turn back when within 30 feet of his destination. The water here was up to his shoulders, and to attempt to swim, attired as he was would have been an impossibility. He gained the bank and by climbing precariously over large, moss covered boulders he found a spot where he could peer behind the wall of water. His face registered only disappointment to the four men who had followed him with their eyes.

"There is a recess back here that appears to extend backward only about ten feet, although I can not see where it meets the water," he said.

"WELL there is one way of finding out," said Clive. He quickly shed the few clothes he was wearing, and plunged into the pool at the base of the falls. Swimming under water he passed behind the falls, and then came to the surface to inspect his surroundings. By means of the subdued light that filtered

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through the cascade behind him Clive saw the recess that d'Artagnan had mentioned, but to his own surprise he also saw at a slight angle of the grotto wall the entrance to a cavern, the top of which extended about six inches above the surface of the water. He peered into this hole, but could see nothing but darkness. By diving to the bottom he found the water to be about ten feet deep at this point, and under water he could see the hazy outline of the cavern. He came to the surface long enough to get his breath, and then recklessly dove into the mouth of the cavern. He swam under water, coming to the surface every few seconds to assure himself that there was still an air space above the water, and he soon discovered that the ceiling of the cavern was getting higher and higher above the surface of the water. Soon he was able to swim on the surface, although it was now getting so dark that he had difficulty in keeping clear of the somewhat jagged walls. Behind him the water still had a greenish translucence from the sunlight, and as his eyes became accustomed to the darkness of the cavern he was aware of a strange bluish light that seemed to cling to the walls.

"Phosphorescence," he thought, but as he swam on farther into the cavern the light became brighter until he was able to distinguish details of the walls. He was soon able to touch the bottom of the tunnel with his feet, and he welcomed the opportunity to rest after what he calculated was a one hundred yard swim. The cavern had become wider, and a short distance further on the water had become so shallow that swimming was no longer possible, and Clive waded through water knee deep.

Since he had first noticed the blue light an oppressive weight seemed to have settled upon Clive's mind. At first he was merely unable to correlate his thoughts, but as the light grew brighter all thoughts left him except the knowledge that he must forge onward. It was now nearly as light as day in the cavern, and as Clive stumbled on through the water a strange vertigo seized him. He seemed to be in the center of a gigantic balloon that was being inflated with every step he took. Ahead of him he was aware of two tunnels, he tried to reason which he should take, but finding this impossible he stumbled on, trusting in luck that he would find the right one. The water was again becoming deeper, so that when he reached the junction of the three caverns he was swimming. The walls were still ballooning away from him when he plunged into the nearest tunnel, but as soon as he had passed the portal the blue light vanished, and the weight was lifted from his mind, as though the balloon had suddenly burst. Ahead of him he could see the light from outdoors, although this light had a strange red cast. The air seemed very thin and he experienced great difficulty in breathing. He soon had to swim under water again, and this last dash brought him out into the open.

"Great guns!" He exclaimed, as he viewed the landscape before him. He was looking upon a dead world. Directly before him mouldered the ruins of what appeared to have been a mighty city, and beyond these stretched an endless ocean. The sky above was nearly black, stars were visible, and a somewhat faded, orange moon could be seen descending beyond the horizon. The sun appeared as a reddish orb, suspended almost directly overhead. No sign of life was to be seen anywhere.

CLIVE knew he must get back to the main cavern, and take the other tunnel. He was about to dive back into the cavern when the figures of d'Ar-

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tagnan and Porthos appeared at his side.

"Mordieu!" the latter exclaimed as he gazed upon the dismal landscape before him. "This is not France, either." His voice had a strange high pitch in the thin atmosphere.

"Indeed not," said d'Artagnan; "so we must rejoin Athos and Aramis who evidently took the other tunnel."

"But that cursed blue light," said Porthos. "It makes you want to tear your hair out when you try to think what you are doing."

"Tell me," said Clive; "when you rode through the cavern this morning, wasn't there any water?"

"No, nor that blue light," said d'Artagnan. "When we entered the cavern we could see the light from the other end. It took us about three minutes to ride through."

"Let us get back," gasped Porthos. "I'm having the devil's own time trying to breathe."

"Good idea, I was just about to start back when you came." Taking a deep breath Clive plunged into the entrance to the cavern, the others followed.

Knowing what to expect the three men were able to find their way into the "other" tunnel, and soon they were with Athos and Aramis on the bank of the stream, although still within the cavern. Ahead of them, framed by the entrance to the cave they looked out upon a beautiful green landscape.

"France at last," sighed Porthos. Athos motioned him to silence, and pointed to a clump of brush about fifty yards past the entrance to the cave.

"It's an ambush," he whispered; "and here we are unarmed."

"But what shall we do?" asked Porthos.

"We could wait until dark and try to slip past them," said d'Artagnan; "but if it is the cardinal that has sent them after us, we would never reach Paris."

"Perhaps Monsieur Clive has a suggestion," said Athos.

"Yeah, maybe," said Clive. "But I should know what this is all about first."

The musketeers exchanged questioning glances, and then d'Artagnan spoke:

"We found a man dying at the side of the road. He was an Englishman bearing a message from a party in England to the queen. The message consisted of a picture, a miniature of the English party, upon which was written a message which would have been very incriminating since we are at war with England. The man had been beaten and robbed of his precious portmanteau containing the picture. He described his assailant to us and then died.

"We located the man at an inn at the next town. He was in the act of transferring the picture to an agent of the cardinal when we found him. Athos and Porthos sought a quarrel with the two men, which ended in a duel, and while this matter was being attended to, Aramis and I recovered the picture along with military plans and secrets that this fellow had intended turning over to the English."

D'Artagnan finished speaking, and the four musketeers looked at Clive.

"It is obvious that we will have to return to my country to get weapons," said Clive; "and I have a plan whereby we can drag motorcycles through these caverns—that will solve the problem of how to get to Paris."

"Bravo!" cried the musketeers.

"How long will it take to carry out your plan?" asked d'Artagnan.

"We should be back here with the equipment by tomorrow night," Clive replied. "But we can't waste any time."

ON THE journey back through the caverns Clive estimated the dis-

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tance to be less than two hundred yards. He also discovered that it had taken them only thirty minutes to make the round trip, although it had seemed like days had elapsed in passing through the zone of blue light.

They lost no time in getting back to the truck, and were soon speeding toward town. At first the musketeers showed signs of uneasiness which might have been construed as fear, had it been anyone else, at the "tremendous" speed of the tanker. Soon, however, they became accustomed to the speed, and became as enthusiastic as children over their first ride, even wanting Clive to race a car that had just passed the truck.

Clive's first stop upon reaching town was at the local clothing store.

"Fix these fellows up with some 'Levis,' and shirts and things, George," he said to the storekeeper. "I'll be back in about an hour to pick them up. Incidentally, they don't speak English."

He then called upon the sheriff who informed him that the four horses had gone to the ranch of Bill Price, the breeder of fancy horses, who had asked the sheriff to try to find the owners as he would like to acquire the beautiful animals. Clive couldn't have asked for better luck, and he soon had closed a deal with the rancher who paid him enough for the horses and their furnishings to completely equip the expedition. The musketeers reluctantly parted with the noble beasts, realizing, however, that it would be impossible to take the horses with them.

The five motorcycles had to be ordered from Las Vegas—to be delivered in the morning—and in the meantime many other preparations had to be made. Clive then purchased five rifles and an equal number of .38 revolvers, and all the ammunition in town that could be used in these firearms. He also purchased a large quantity of hemp rope. His next call was upon the tinsmith, where he had a tin box made in which to pack the firearms, ammunition, and clothing, as well as the picture and priceless documents that d'Artagnan was carrying. Finally he had a sledge built upon which a motorcycle could be firmly mounted.

As a gesture to his own vanity Clive got out the dress saber that had been presented to him as Cadet Colonel of the R.O.T.C. in college, and had the edge honed to razor sharpness. He felt that this weapon might stand him in good stead, since he had been captain of the varsity fencing team in his undergraduate days.

That evening Clive spent several hours in explaining the principle of the operation of the motorcycles and firearms to the musketeers, so that when the motorcycles arrived next morning they required very little coaching.

The last thing Clive did was pack the tin box. In it he placed the firearms and ammunition, as well as their swords, the French clothes of the musketeers, his own R.O.T.C. uniform, a few medical instruments and a first aid kit, a few cans of food, and finally the picture and documents. He then soldered the lid down so that the box was perfectly waterproof, and loaded it upon a truck he had hired for the occasion, along with the sledge, rope, and a number of five-gallon cans of gasoline. They were now ready to start.

THEY found it a fairly simple matter to drive the motorcycles up the stream bed, and the driver of the truck was able to bring the load within a half mile of the waterfall by driving through the water. Here they unloaded the truck, and sent it back to town. They found that they could

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fasten the sledge behind two of the motorcycles and drag it to the box canyon, together with the cans of gasoline. The tin box was dragged by a third motorcycle while the fourth and fifth brought the large coils of rope.

When they had their equipment all assembled at the waterfall, Clive melted some paraffin that he had brought with him, and applied a generous coat to all parts of the motors that might be injured by water. While he was doing this, Athos, Porthos and Aramis took the end of one of the ropes and started through the cavern. D'Artagnan "fed" the rope out to them as they proceeded, and watched for prearranged jerk signals. He soon received the signal that indicated the others had reached the other end, and he fastened the rope to the sledge at this point. Clive and d'Artagnan then securely clamped one of the motorcycles to the sledge, and fastened another rope to the other end of the sledge. D'Artagnan gave the rope a jerk and in a movement the sledge began moving toward the falls. The two men accompanied this first load as far as the entrance to the cavern, in order to get it started right, and then returned to wait for the signal to pull the empty sledge back.

By late afternoon they had transferred all of the equipment to the French end of the cavern. Clive took a farewell look at the twentieth century landscape, and followed d'Artagnan into the cavern, headed for seventeenth century adventures even wilder than he could imagine.

"Are your friends still out there?" Clive asked, as once again the five men were reunited on the banks of the stream within the cavern.

"Yes, they are still there," said Athos; "but they are showing signs of restlessness—they don't make much pretense of hiding themselves, and they have openly changed guard three times today."

"If it is a fight they are looking for they won't have to wait much longer," muttered d'Artagnan.

"Fight you say? Mordieu; I'd fight an army now to get back to the inn for a bite to eat," said Porthos.

"Fortunately," said Clive; "you won't have to fight an army for something to eat, as I brought a few cans along that we can open." He opened the large tin box, and withdrew the canned food, as well as the clothing he had packed in the box. They were soon dressed, and Clive demonstrated the marvel of the twentieth century, the can-opener, to the wondering musketeers.

"You must truly have some wondrous plants in your country, to grow this kind of fruit," remarked Porthos as he picked up a can of beans that Clive had just opened. "That's odd," he remarked after tasting the contents; "they taste just like beans after you get that hard shell opened. Say—that shell is metal." This last remark was prompted by a closer scrutiny of the can. The others burst into a roar of laughter that echoed through the cavern like a peal of thunder.

THE sound of their own laughter reminded the musketeers of their indiscretion, and they immediately turned toward the cavern entrance, to see whether the guards outside had heard them.

"I don't see what you were laughing at," said Porthos; "and like as not the cardinal's guards heard you, because they seem to be preparing to attack us."

"There must be thirty of them out there," said Aramis.

"A mere handful," replied d'Artagnan.

"Protect yourselves, Messieurs, they

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appear to be preparing to fire blindly into the cavern with their muskets, and as you know, fate is a more deadly marksman than the cardinal's guards," Athos warned.

As he finished these words a volley of musket shots staccatoed outside, and Clive heard the whine of musket balls uncomfortably near. He quickly distributed the arms that he had brought in the tin box, while the others occupied themselves drying up the excess moisture on the motorcycles.

The guards outside moved up ten paces and fired another volley with their muskets.

"It is du Bois that is leading them," muttered Aramis, a suggestion of contempt in his voice; "I would know his swaggering form even if he wore a mask, instead of hiding behind his high collar." Clive could not see that this man swaggered any more than any one of his four companions, and he smiled inwardly.

The guards still advanced, pausing every ten paces to fire a volley blindly into the cavern, while the five men inside were preparing for a rapid departure. They each fastened a five gallon can of gasoline behind the seat, and when the ammunition was divider up among them, each put his allotment in the saddle bags on the motorcycles. They mounted their machines, and just as the guards gained the entrance to the cavern all five motors "took hold" at once. The surprise of the guards was wondrous to see, but none stayed to investigate. Not wishing to be encumbered by any excess baggage they dropped their muskets, hats and a surprising array of personal equipment as they fled for the bushes, the motorcycles right at their heels. Directly in his path, Clive saw a beautiful sword that had been dropped by one of the fleeing guards, and without thinking of any possible consequences he reached down and picked it up as he swept by.

The musketeers were well out of range before any of the guards had recovered his faculties enough to retrieve his musket and fire after the vanishing quarry. The latter were now approaching the outskirts of Amiens, and as they proceeded peasants along the way were deeply impressed. Some of the women became hysterical, others collapsed, still others dropped to their knees and prayed, while the greatest number of people ran until they felt they were safe, and then gazed after the "monsters" with protruding eyes, and mouths agape. The effect upon domesticated animals along the way was practically universal—they wanted to leave, and without delay.

"Let us stop at the inn and inquire about our lackeys," shouted Porthos. The others agreed, much to Clive's surprise, for he knew that the musketeers believed the lackeys to be under arrest by the cardinal's guards, and the inn would probably be swarming with guards.

FOLLOWING d'Artagnan, they rode their motorcycles right into the main dining hall of the inn. The occupants of the room had scarcely more courage than had the peasants along the road, and in a moment the room was a shambles. In the confusion Clive looked up and saw a uniformed guard on a balcony at the end of the room unlimber a musket and point it in the direction of the musketeers. In true western fashion Clive whipped out his revolver, it spoke twice and on the second shot the guard fell to the floor. Soon other guards had muskets in their hands, and were falling under the poorly aimed but effective revolver shots of the musketeers. Although the guards were seasoned war-

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riors, picked from among the best in France, this onslaught with deadly revolvers was more than a match for their awkward muskets, and they quickly withdrew. This respite for the five men was short-lived, however, for scarcely had the last man vanished through the rear door than a number of guards that had been at another inn charged in the front door with swords drawn. Clive leveled his revolver and pulled the trigger, but he had already fired the sixth shot.

"Your sword," he heard Athos cry; "defend yourself," and the musketeer stepped in front of him in time to intercept an onrushing guard, giving Clive a chance to draw his saber.

Clive's heart was pounding wildly as he stepped in line with the musketeers, and crossed swords with one of the guards; he realized that this time not the reputation of his alma mater, but his own life was at stake, and he tried to calculate his chances of winning against a seasoned swordsman. Much to his own surprise he found himself parrying the thrusts of his opponent, and as he gained confidence he assumed the offensive, while his opponent was forced to fall back to a strictly defensive technique.

"After all," he told himself; "the art of fencing has had three hundred years to improve itself since this fellow learned how," and he sprang with double enthusiasm at his opponent. This last thrust disarmed the latter, and before he could recover his sword Clive had picked it up. The guard stood with folded arms:

"Slay me Monsieur, or return my sword, for I will not surrender."

To Clive this was an awkward situation. He tried to remember from his readings what was done in a case like this. He glanced at his companions, and saw that d'Artagnan and Aramis were each engaging two opponents, and at that moment Athos and Porthos eliminated their men with thrusts through the body. This left one guard apiece for the musketeers, and Clive turned back to his man.

"I hate to do this, brother," he said in English; "but as the old saying goes, 'it's for your own good'," and he floored the guard with a right to the chin. Acting quickly, he reloaded the revolvers of the musketeers, and then taking his rifle from the scabbard that hung on his motorcycle he stood guard over the two doors to the room, while the musketeers completed their business.

Athos was first to dispatch his adversary, and going to the kitchen he dragged the inn-keeper from the floor where he had fallen, trembling, at the beginning of the engagement. Giving him a preliminary shaking he said:

"If you value your beggarly life you will tell what has become of our lackeys."

"They set out on their horses yesterday, shortly after Monsieur and his companions left."

"You lie," said Athos, getting a firmer grip abut the fellow's throat, and shaking him even more vigorously than before. "Tell me the truth or I shall see that your head parts company with your body."

"Mercy, Monsieur, mercy!" groaned the poor fellow. "They said they would kill my little ones." Athos discontinued the shaking.

"Quick, fool, lead me to our servants or your little ones will lose their father."

BY THIS time d'Artagnan and Aramis had joined Athos, and the three followed the inn-keeper to the cellar. Clive and Porthos remained in the main dining room of the inn to prevent any further interruptions.

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"What sword is that you have so carefully fastened to your machine?" asked Porthos, indicating the sword Clive had picked up as he left the cavern. Clive removed the sword from its improvised scabbard, explaining where he got it. Porthos contemplated the sword for a moment, and then speaking as though to himself:

"Du Bois is very proud of that sword, and perhaps the sword should be proud of its master. Outside of the ranks of the musketeers there isn't a better swordsman in all France," and then to Clive: "After the way you conducted yourself in the affair with the guards you will, perhaps, be a match for him."

"A match for him?"

"Of course, when you present him with his sword. You knew, didn't you, that what you have done constitutes a challenge to duel?"

"Oh, yes," Clive said weakly. This was an unexpected turn of events, he had taken the sword more as a college boy prank than for any other reason, and had intended leaving it thrust into a post along the way with a note attached. He knew now that if he was to stay in this country he must fight a duel with du Bois—and win.

Clive's musings were interrupted by the sound of gunfire coming from the region of the cellar. Porthos immediately sprang toward the cellar door, and Clive was about to follow, but he stopped a moment to listen to the shots. So far only revolver shots had been fired, and he decided that he would be of much greater value guarding the machines, and the entrance to the cellar than by mixing in the fight in the crowded basement. This proved to be a wise decision, because the sound of the shooting was attracting considerable attention, and Clive found it necessary to keep the would-be interventionists at bay by means of a few well-placed rifle shots. Between shots he started the motors on all five machines, and in a few moments the sound of firing ceased in the cellar, and almost immediately the sound of heavy boots running up the wooden stairs could be heard.

Four men burst through the cellar door, followed immediately by the musketeers who closed and bolted the door after them, and then made for their respective "mounts." The lackeys (for it was they who had first appeared) were somewhat bewildered by the machines, and not a little frightened, but at a sign from their masters, and hearing a vigorous pounding coming from the bolted door, they decided the motorcycles were the lesser evil, and mounted ahead of the gasoline can that each machine carried.

It was growing dark when this small, but formidable, group of warrior emerged upon the high road to Paris. The scattering of musket shots that were fired after them, therefore, went wild, and only tended to heighten the spirits of the adventurers. The lackeys soon became accustomed to the "tremendous" speed at which they were traveling, and even began to enjoy the ride, but nevertheless they kept turning around to see if the devil were chasing them to recover his horses.

AS THEY sped through darkened villages lights blinked on in the windows, and looking back the travelers could see lights pour out of houses and dance around like fireflies in the streets. And in those towns there was excited talk about Satan and his legions who had passed through on the way to Paris to wreak vengeance upon the corrupt court. Soon women were found who were possessed of evil spirits, and bells over the countryside be-

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gan tolling that was to continue all night. Holy men, and women, worked feverishly to cast out the evil spirits, but by morning Satan had taken his toll, and there were many funeral processions in the villages between Amiens and Paris.

Two hours after leaving the inn at Amiens, "Satan's Legions" entered the heart of Paris. Here they separated, and each made his way to his own quarters. Clive followed Athos, for he apparently was the only one of the musketeers that could furnish adequate lodging—Aramis saying he was expecting a messenger and did not wish to disturb Monsieur Clive, d'Artagnan's quarters were too small, and Porthos not giving any good excuse. Clive followed Athos, therefore, and as they sped through the practically deserted streets of Paris they evoked almost the same reaction as had occurred on the high road. This was hardly what they wanted, so in order to avoid undue publicity they cut their motors when they turned into the street upon which Athos' lodgings stood, and coasted to his door. They immediately hustled the machines inside, and closed the door against any prying eyes.

Athos and the lackey were soon asleep, but in spite of the strenuous day Clive was unable to doze off. He lay tossing on his couch, animated by the excitement of the day, and that in prospect. When the first gray blurring of dawn found the one window in the room, Clive pulled a chair up to this seventeenth century facsimile of glass, and attempted to view any activity that might be going on in the street.

"This must be a pretty quiet neighborhood," he thought. "Looks like it's deserted." At that moment he heard a loud pounding coming from the street. Looking in the direction of the sound Clive saw a group of uniformed men standing before the doorway of a house near the intersection where they had cut their motors the preceding night.

"Open up in there!" he heard a voice command. "It's his Majesty's Police." The door was opened by an anxious looking little man who was wearing a night-shirt, and night-cap, and the police entered, pushing him aside. As they disappeared in the doorway, a second group rounded the corner and paused before the door of the next house, where this scene was reenacted.

"Looks like the dragnet is out for someone," Clive thought, and then an idea suddenly struck him. "Maybe it is for us! Anyway, it wouldn't do for them to find these motorcycles." He turned to awaken Athos, and found him already dressing. Grimaud had also arisen, and was preparing breakfast.

"Monsieur the Lieutenant of Police arose early to chase devils," said Athos, coming to the window. "It appears as though Monsieur the cardinal has a hand in the chase—otherwise we would not have been disturbed for another hour."

"It's going to be rather hard to hide those motorcycles," said Clive, "and they'll know I'm not French the minute I open my mouth, even if they don't notice my clothes."

"If my plans succeed they will not come in," said Athos in a very calm, almost light-hearted manner which Clive was to learn the musketeer assumed in tense situations. "If my plans do not succeed they will come in here where we we will demand their swords, and if they do not wish to give them to us we will have to kill them or be killed by them." He paused and glanced at Clive, who had not moved a muscle on his face. "Or if Monsieur Clive does not wish to see it through he is free now to take his motorcycle and ride back

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the way he came, with our gratitude for what he has done."

Clive smiled. "I wouldn't miss this for the world," he said.

"Bravo! You speak like a true Musketeer," said Athos, enthusiastically. "But we must finish dressing now so that we may not embarrass the police."

CLIVE had forgotten for the moment that he was not dressed, and after having a quick sponge bath with water that Grimaud had brought for him he donned his uniform. They had barely started breakfast when the inevitable pounding sounded at the door. Grimaud glanced at his master, who by means of a sign told him to continue with his work, while he continued his breakfast. The knock was heard again, this time it was louder, and was accompanied by the voice of one of the police who offered to remove the door if it were not immediately opened. Athos arose and buckled his sword at his side, then walking leisurely to the door, opened it just as a battering ram was about to be brought into play. Seeing a gentleman standing in the doorway, fully armed, and wearing the uniform of the king's musketeers, the attitude of the police was somewhat softened.

"Pardon, Monsieur, but we must search your house," said the one who seemed to be the leader of the group.

"And what do you expect to find?" asked Athos in his most dignified manner. The police officer removed his hat and scratched his head.

"We don't exactly know," he answered. "Last night it was reported that the devil was riding through the countryside, and this neighborhood is reported as being one of the places he stopped. We know, Monsieur, that it is foolish to search for the devil, but Monsieur the cardinal has ordered a complete investigation."

"Does Monsieur then believe that I could harbor the devil in my poor lodgings, when he has so many residences of his own in Paris?" Athos' attitude had changed, he was now smiling at the minions of the law. It was several moments before these men understood what Athos meant, but when they did they laughed heartily.

"We are sorry to bother Monsieur," said the spokesman, "but we have orders."

Athos took the spokesman aside. "Would you wish to compromise a person of quality just to carry out your stupid orders?" he asked. A knowing look spread over the face of the officer. He turned to the others:

"Next house!" he ordered.

Clive, who was watching through the window, allowed a sigh of relief to escape when he saw the police march to the next door, and when Athos told him how he had swung the deal, Clive decided that corruption had its points. The two returned to their breakfast.

"What's next on the program?" asked Clive as he finished eating.

"I have sent Grimaud out to the lodgings of our friends to request them to attend us here before we do anything further."

D'ARTAGNAN, living nearest to the lodgings of Athos, was the first to arrive, Porthos was close on his heels, and a short time later Aramis appeared —explaining that he had stopped by the hotel of M. de Treville to request an audience for the five men.

"Well done," cried d'Artagnan; "it will be well if he sees the king before the cardinal's messenger arrives from Amiens."

"Yes, and it will be well if we complete our mission before the Lieutenant of Police misses the guards he sent to my house," said Porthos.

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The others looked at him with undisguised amazement.

"I hope you haven't done anything r a s h, Porthos," said Aramis, impatiently. "Or is this one of your jokes?"

"Well what could I do?" asked Porthos. "My bourgeois neighbors told the police that they had seen the devil enter my house, so when they came to search, I had to detain them. I didn't kill them, although I had to run my sword through the thigh of one, and the arm of the second, and I am afraid I cracked the skull of the third with my fist."

"But what have you done with them now?" asked Athos.

"I have bound them firmly and placed them on my bed, where Mousqueton is dressing their wounds."

"In that case, there is only one thing to do," said d'Artagnan. "We must prevent these men from telling what they know, but at the same time we can not let them stay in Porthos' lodgings."

"And how do you propose to do that?" asked Porthos.

"Very simple, we will send our lackeys to your lodgings with wine—cheap, powerful wine. Our lackeys will see to it that the police drink the wine until overcome by it, and then set them free. Who will believe the story of a drunkard? They will be discharged immediately, and we will not be troubled by them again."

"Bravo!" cried Aramis.

"I still say d'Artagnan has the wisest head of the four of us," said Athos. He gave Grimaud a signal with his hand, and the lackey immediately began to carry out the plan, assisted by Planchet and Bazin.

"I see you have brought your portmanteau, d'Artagnan," said Athos when the lackeys had left. "Are you sure it still contains the precious picture and those so important documents?"

D'Artagnan blanched s l i g h t l y at these words, and quickly opened the small leather case he was carrying, and then closed it again with an expression of relief.

"Yes, I still have them," he said, "but I would like to get them into the proper hands without any more delay."

"Then let us go to see M. de Treville at once," said Athos.

Clive had been watching this scene in silence. It was beginning to appear as though his usefulness had about ended, and consequently he lingered behind as the others went to the door. Athos turned with a questioning look on his face:

"Do you not wish to accompany us Monsieur Clive?" he asked. "I'm sure M. de Treville will be disappointed if he does not have the opportunity of speaking with the man that brought us unscathed through a regiment of the cardinal's best guards."

Clive felt his face flush. "I thought my uniform would start an investigation, and get you fellows in trouble," he said.

"Your foreign speech without the uniform would cause much more trouble," said Athos, "but with M. de Treville's protection the police will not dare to touch you in your foreign uniform."

"And in addition," said Aramis, "we owe M. Clive a debt of gratitude which we can not allow to go unrepaid."

"One for all and all for one," cried Porthos. "You are one of us now."

"Let us be off," came the impatient voice of d'Artagnan who had gone outside, and could not understand the delay.

This was all the urging Clive needed; he followed the others out the door, and arm-in-arm the five men marched musketeer-fashion toward the hotel of the captain of the musketeers.

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NEEDLESS to say, Clive attracted a great deal of attention along the route, but marching in the center of such an imposing array of musketeers no one dared question his presence. Other musketeers that were encountered, although displaying curiosity, boisterously called out the usual greetings to their four comrades. This curiosity was mirrored in the face of M. de Treville, who had been awaiting their arrival, and who escorted them immediately to his private chambers.

"Your arrival seems always to be accompanied by some sort of a crisis," he said in more of a paternal than critical manner. "I presume I am not far wrong in assuming you gentlemen to be the cause of the story of devils flying over the countryside on fiery dragons, that has Monsieur le Cardinal so upset this morning?"

"You are correct, Monsieur, we were the cause of the excitement. We did not encourage the stories of the devils, however, and we didn't have time to discourage them; so you see, we are innocent of the whole thing, although being the cause of it," said Porthos.

"Porthos, you talk in circles," said d'Artagnan. "What you say is not important anyhow," and then turning to Treville he continued: "We have come to speak to you of a matter of utmost importance to the queen and the state." He opened his portmanteau and handed the contents to the captain. Treville's eyes widened when he saw the picture, and read the inscription.

"Does Monsieur le Cardinal know you have these things?" he asked.

"Yes Monsieur," answered d'Artagnan, "but he hasn't had time to receive word of our escape from his guards at Amiens, since we came by a much speedier m e t h o d than horseback." Then d'Artagnan described the manner in which they obtained the picture and documents, and how they had been waylaid in Amiens, and had escaped by riding into the cave, and of the unbelievable adventures that had befallen them in the strange new world. Treville listened attentively to this recital, not able to suppress expressions of incredulity, and frequently gazing wonderingly at Clive, his uniform, and the revolver strapped at his side. When d'Artagnan had finished his story, Treville turned to Clive.

"I do not quite understand this story," he said, "but M. d'Artagnan says you are a brave man, and I am grateful to you for bringing my musketeers through safely. It is small wonder His Eminence is upset about the flight of the devils last night," he continued, now addressing the musketeers as well as Clive. "It will be well for me to see the king before M. le Cardinal receives word from Amiens. As for the message for the queen, I will allow you to handle that in your own manner, and will forget that I ever saw such a picture." Then calling his valet de chambre, who always stood in a small adjoining room, he ordered his carriage. This order was immediately fulfilled, and soon the captain, his four musketeers, and the American were speeding through the streets of Paris toward the Louvre. The carriage was drawn by eight magnificent horses, and Clive could interpret from the attitudes of the people they passed, the respect that was held for the captain of the musketeers —the third man in the government.

Before arriving at the Louvre the carriage stopped and discharged all its occupants except M. de Treville, who continued on to the main gate, while the other five made their way on foot to the small side door. D'Artagnan asked for M. Laporte, and soon the queen's valet de chambre appeared, and recognizing his visitors led them to a small room

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having no windows, and only one door. The latter he bolted as soon as they were all inside. He cast a suspicious glance at Clive, but said nothing to him except to express his "pleasure" at meeting him.

D'ARTAGNAN repeated the story, just as he had told it to Treville, and Laporte listened attentively until the narrator arrived at the journey to the "new world," and then a smile of incredulity crossed his face and remained throughout the narration of the remainder of the story. When d'Artagnan had finished he handed the picture to Laporte, and the smile vanished from the face of the latter.

"You have served the queen well, Messieurs, in obtaining this picture, but since you are gentlemen of honor, and obviously have not been drinking, you have undoubtedly been bewitched, and your 'friend,' Monsieur Clive, is a sorcerer." Laporte said this with a finality that was meant to allow no dispute, but anger immediately flashed in the eyes of the musketeers, while Clive was so amused that he could not prevent a chuckle from escaping him.

"Do you believe that I have bewitched you while you were standing here with us?" Clive asked the queen's advisor.

"Of course not," said Laporte, "you haven't made a single motion with your hands, and your lips haven't parted in any incantation since you have been here, for I have been watching you."

"Oh brother!" Clive exclaimed in English.

"What was that?" asked the valet de chambre.

"If I haven't bewitched you, how do you explain this?" asked Clive, producing a small pocket flashlight, and flashing it in the eyes of the old man.

"You have bewitched that piece of metal," Laporte hedged.

"Do you believe that any of these musketeers could do this?" Clive asked.

"Certainly not!"

The musketeers could see what Clive was driving at, and they each produced one of the lights with which he had supplied them, and flashed them in the direction of Clive's accuser. To say that Laporte was chagrined would be an understatement, but since he was a gentleman he apologized — coolly — to the American, and asked if he could take one of the instruments to the queen, as he knew she would request to see one when she heard about it. Clive handed his light to the queen's valet de chambre, who took the light and the picture and left the room after asking the others to wait.

The darkness of the room seemed heightened by the flicker of a single candle on a table in the corner, and Clive thought the air very stale, although the others did not seem to show any discomfort. The five men sat in silence for nearly half an hour, when Laporte returned.

"Will Monsieur Clive please accompany me?" he asked in a tone that expressed more a command than a request. The musketeers shot questioning looks at each other, and Athos was about to refuse to let him go alone, when Clive spoke.

"I will be glad to go along if this is on the level," he said.

"On the level?" questioned Laporte.

"I mean, if it isn't a trap of some sort. I really wouldn't like to be fed to the lions or burned at the stake, or whatever it is that you do to sorcerers and witches," Clive explained.

"If Monsieur Clive does not return," said Porthos, "you will account to us."

"Put yourselves at ease, Messieurs, no harm will come to Monsieur Clive," Laporte assured them.

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CLIVE followed the old man out into the corridor, and up a seemingly endless circular stairway. He finally entered a fairly small room, where he was again told to wait. The room was richly furnished and hung with silks and tapestries. Four large windows admitted adequate light, and one of them being open allowed a fresh stream of air to fill the room. The air was perfumed with the scent of flowers, and looking out the window Clive could see a beautiful garden in full bloom below him. This was a marked change from the filth and squalor he had seen in the streets of Paris. While he was thus absorbed in the view before him he heard the door open behind him, and turning he saw a young woman of such breath-taking beauty that he stood spellbound.

As for the queen, for it was she who had entered the room, the smile of graciousness on her face immediately changed to an expression of astonishment when she saw Clive.

"It is he!" she cried, and then realizing what she had said she blushed deeply and attempted to compose her features. This aroused Clive from the spell he was under, and he bowed low as he had seen courtiers do in the motion pictures.

"I am highly flattered that you would recognize me, Madame, but I have been in your country for such a short time that I am curious to learn where you saw me before," he said, intentionally omitting "your highness," though he knew he was addressing the queen.

"Even the voice is the same," she said as though speaking to herself. "Perhaps it is possible—maybe it could be true." A strange fire burned in her eyes as though her soul were probing into the limbo of misplaced memories. Seeing Clive's increasing embarrassment she recovered her original poise. "You undoubtedly think it very stupid of me, but I have known you, however, for years from a dream in which you came from a distant country and age." She walked toward Clive as though hypnotized.

Clive's mind was reeling, as the queen came toward him he knew that he had experienced this moment before.

"Anne," he whispered. "Anne dear, I have known you through eternity."

TREVILLE had been granted an immediate audience with the king, who was preparing for a stag hunt, and was in a good humor notwithstanding the early hour.

"What brings you here so early, my dear Treville, and with such a gloomy expression? Just to look at you might spoil my whole day. You should do as I do, and let the cares of the state fall upon the shoulders of our dear friend, Monsieur le Cardinal." The king said this in a manner of mock seriousness, and burst into laughter when he had finished.

"As a matter of fact," said Treville, "it is about the cardinal, or I should say the cardinal's guards, that I come to see you."

"What!" exclaimed the king. "Have they been stirring up any more duels with my musketeers?"

"Worse than that, sire," answered Treville.

"How, worse than that?"

Treville handed the documents which he had taken from d'Artagnan to the king. The latter glanced through the papers and recognized them as containing military information.

"Four of your musketeers, with whom you are personally acquainted, discovered an English spy who had these papers in his possession. They removed the documents and attempted to bring them directly to you, sire; but

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when they reached Amiens they were ambushed by a company of His Eminence's guards and were forced to take refuge in a cave. What occurred in the cave I will leave for them to relate, but if it had not been for the help of a foreigner, Monsieur Clive, they might now be bound and gagged in the stinking cellar of an inn in Amiens."

"And this foreigner, Monsieur Clive, how could he aid four musketeers in repelling successfully a whole company of His Eminence's guards?" asked the king, more concerned over the details of the fight than by the fact that an act of treason had been committed.

"He has a pistol that will fire six shots without reloading, and he has a two-wheeled vehicle that will travel as fast as the wind without the use of horses."

"Have you seen these things?" asked the king.

"I have seen the pistols, and this morning I have heard nothing else but tales of the vehicles, and you shall hear these same tales before the day is over," answered Treville.

"And is M. Clive in Paris?" asked the king. "If so I would like to see him."

"Yes, sire, he is in Paris. I will have him here at your convenience—after the hunt perhaps?"

"Hunt!" cried the king. "There'll be no hunt today. With my kingdom practically toppling about my ears, and M. le Cardinal placing his guards in the way of the loyal men who would try to prevent the collapse, I have more important business than hunting. Bring him this evening and have him bring the vehicle and the pistol to show me for I am very curious about these wonders. And say, Treville, have Messieurs Athos, Porthos, Aramis, and d'Artagnan come also—they deserve my gratitude."

This was the very mood in which Treville wished to leave the king, so he took his leave and departed. As he was leaving he heard Louis XIII call his valet de chambre, La Chesnaye, and tell him to send for His Eminence, the cardinal. This command was unnecessary, however, for Treville met Monsieur le Cardinal on the stairs. The latter was in great haste, and was clouded up like a thunder storm—not speaking as he passed the captain of the musketeers.

Armand Jean Duplessis, Cardinal de Richelieu, for one of the few times in his life found himself in a position so awkward that he could think of no way out. He could not give the real reason for the attack on the musketeers for he did not have the picture as proof, and he knew that he could not fabricate a story since M. de Treville had already seen the king. He decided then upon an attitude of hurt innocence, neither admitting or denying anything. He took his scolding from the king, therefore, which was really fairly light, since privately Louis XIII feared his minster.

CLIVE and the musketeers had returned to the hotel of M. de Treville to await the return of that gentleman. They did not have long to wait for soon his carriage pulled into the courtyard and discharged its occupant. Treville went straight to his private chambers, and then sent his secretary out to look for the five men, whom he had passed in the corridor without noticing. When they entered the room they found the captain in a good humor, and the musketeers immediately realized that things had gone well at the Louvre.

"Monsieur Clive," said Treville, "the king appears to have taken a special interest in you, he has granted you an

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audience this evening." He then spoke to the others: "You gentlemen will accompany M. Clive, and you will take at least one of your so-called 'motorcycles,' and your pistols, for the king is deeply interested in them." The musketeers exchanged glances with Clive. "I hope," continued Treville, "that you gentlemen have not reconsidered, and decided that this has all been a dream."

"I hope Monsieur does not doubt us," said Athos.

"Not if you affirm your story," said Treville, "but you must admit that this story is almost unbelievable. In spite of the fact that I believe you gentlemen implicitly, I can not comprehend what you tell me. I can not understand how men can journey back and forth through time—that journey which has always been a one-way, one-speed journey from which there has been no return." He paused, as though expecting an answer.

"I'll have to tell him about Einstein sometime," thought Clive, but he said nothing, and as the others had nothing to say Treville continued:

"Incidentally, I have not told the king your story, so you can make it as convincing as you care to."

The five companions thanked M. de Treville and left the room. Clive was deeply occupied, not so much over the thought of meeting the king, as over the chance that the queen might be nearby when he met the king. It had been hardly an hour since he had left the queen's chambers, but it seemed like an eternity to him. He knew it was mad to even think of her, the way he thought of her, but he attempted to justify his stand by considering her situation. She was married, and to the king of France; but she was married in name only. The king, prompted by the cardinal, made life miserable for the queen by his petty suspicions and persecutions. The cardinal was in love with the queen, but was so incensed by her hatred for him that he never missed an opportunity to antagonize her, and bring discomfort and embarrassment to her. As for the queen, she had only known one love. True, she had been attracted by the Duke of Buckingham, due mostly to his kindness to her, and to the fact that he was an arch enemy of the cardinal—but her true love was a dream, and the dream was Clive.

Clive was debating the advisability of telling the king about the cavern at Amiens, for this stood as the one means of escape if he could get the queen there on some pretense. But then, he reasoned, the musketeers were loyal to their king, and they would hardly stand by while the American kidnaped the queen. Being so absorbed, he did not notice Grimaud who had been waiting for his master in the corridor, and who showed obvious signs of excitement.

"What is it, Grimaud?" asked Athos. "You may speak."

"They are searching the house," answered the lackey.

"Who?"

"The cardinal's guards."

"How many?"

The lackey held up four fingers.

"Well, what are we waiting for?" asked Clive. The five men left at full speed. It was but a short distance from the hotel of M. de Treville in the Rue du Vieux-Colombier to the modest quarters occupied by Athos in the Rue Ferou, and the five friends covered the distance very quickly. When they arrived at their destination they found a cart drawn up in front of the door, and one of the motorcycles was being loaded into it while the other one already reposed within. This work was being done by the peasant owners of the cart, who were being superintended by one of the cardinal's guards. This

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man appeared vaguely familiar to Clive, who in casting about for his identity noticed the sword the guard was carrying—it was the sword he had picked up at the cavern, and this man was apparently du Bois, the man whose enmity he had unconsciously obtained.

WITH his own sword in his hand, Clive walked up to the guard:

"Am I to understand that you seek to avoid an encounter with me by breaking into my friend's house and stealing your own sword while no one is here to challenge you?" he asked. The guard flushed scarlet, but did not reply. "And what is the meaning of this?" he continued, indicating the motorcycles that now reposed in the cart. The guard finally found his tongue.

"I am acting upon orders of Monsieur le Cardinal," he said in a defiant tone.

"And His Eminence ordered you to recover your sword in this manner?" taunted Clive.

"Monsieur," said the guard whose embarrassment was becoming rage; "are you attempting to provoke a quarrel with me?"

"Well that's the general idea. And about those motorcycles, you might as well unload them since the king has countermanded the cardinal's order."

"The king never countermands his Eminence's orders," said the guard disdainfully.

"Monsieur," said Clive, "you have insulted me twice, and that is twice more than I will allow. Defend yourself."

Again Clive felt the blood mount to his head as he crossed swords with the man that Porthos had said was the best swordsman outside of the musketeers. It took only a few moments for him to verify Porthos' statement, and Clive who had started in on the offensive was frequently forced to fall back on a defensive technique. The two fighters were well matched, and neither could gain more than a temporary advantage. Clive had an inspired science, although lacking in experience, while du Bois made up for a deficiency in the science by years of experience.

The sound of sword play brought the other three guards to the door. One of them had, strapped to his waist, the precious sword of Athos—an heirloom this musketeer had treasured so jealously. Seeing this, Athos uttered a cry and sprang toward the thief.

"His Eminence has apparently surrounded himself with robbers and plunderers," he said, seizing the fellow by the throat, "so I will not accord you the privileges of a gentleman." After administering a profound shaking to the guard, he sent a smashing blow to his jaw which dropped him to the ground like a bundle of rags. Athos then tenderly removed the sword from the guard's belt.

D'Artagnan and Aramis took charge of the other guards, and engaged them in the street, while Porthos superintended the unloading of the motorcycles.

It was still nip and tuck with Clive and du Bois, and it appeared as though this were going to be a contest of endurance. Here Clive had the advantage for he had always kept himself in excellent physical condition by means of vigorous athletics. Du Bois, on the other hand, although a seasoned fighter was an ardent disciple of the "Wine, Women and Song" school. Gradually, therefore, the Frenchman began to wear down; his feints became more obvious, and his thrusts lacked force—his recovery was slower. Clive took advantage of his opponent's fatigue to slip inside his guard and inflict slight wounds in his arms and body. In par-

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rying a blow from the guard who had by now lost so much control that he was swinging wildly at the American, Clive caught his opponent's sword with his own and flung it high into the air, the tip of his own sword passing through the right arm of the guard. Upon striking the cobblestone street the sword broke in two pieces.

"Monsieur," said du Bois, "you have disarmed me and have given me a nasty wound in my sword arm. If, however, you will allow me to obtain another sword I will fight you left-handed." The blood was pouring from the wound in cascades, and the guard was growing very pale.

"You are very brave, Monsieur, but foolish," said Clive, walking toward the guard. "Let me dress your wound, and when it is sufficiently healed to allow you to hold a sword in that hand we can finish our affair." Baring the guard's arm he placed a tourniquet above the wound, and helped him into the house.

CLIVE unpacked the medical instruments and supplies he had brought with him, and boiled the instruments. Then using the best surgical technique he had learned in school he cleaned and dressed the wound, tying off the bleeding vessels. Du Bois watched this procedure with amazement, and no small degree of alarm. When Clive had finished dressing the wound, and the Frenchman found himself still alive he uttered a sigh of relief.

D'Artagnan and Aramis had both rendered their opponents *HORS DE COMBAT* by swords thrusts through the neck of one, and through the hand of the other, and had brought them inside partially to get them off the street and partially out of curiosity to see Clive dress them. The neck injury was a fortunate one in that none of the important structures were severed, and it was a simple matter of stitching and dressing to take care of it. The hand, however, was a different matter—three of the finger tendons had been severed and Clive felt like calling for a surgeon. He realized, however, that he knew more about suturing tendons than anyone in the world at that time, so he did the best he could do, taking two hours to finish the job, and since he did all this work without the use of an anesthetic he was not too proud of the final result.

THEY had an hour yet before their audience with the king, and the musketeers and the American spent half that time preparing themselves for this visit to court. Clive polished his buttons and meticulously brushed the last remaining dust and lint off his uniform. Porthos got out his most elaborate clothing, while Athos, d'Artagnan, and Aramis arrayed themselves simply in their musketeers' uniforms.

They then mounted their motorcycles and converged upon the hotel of M. de Treville. They rode slowly and deliberately through the streets, knowing that they would not be molested, and having no need now for secrecy. Word of their approach flew ahead of them, and consequently as they passed through the streets the windows were filled with faces, and groups of Parisians were gathered at all of the doors.

Reaching the hotel of M. de Treville they drove into the courtyard, and were greeted with a cheer from the musketeers, who quickly surrounded them to ply them with a thousand questions and requests for rides on these strange, noisy mechanical horses. M. de Treville sent his secretary down with the information that he would be prepared to leave for the Louvre within thirty

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minutes, and that he requested them to follow his carriage. In this remaining thirty minutes the five friends occupied themselves by whisking the comrades of the musketeers through the neighboring streets at high speed behind them on their motorcycles. If their passengers had any misgivings about the prospects of such a trip, they did not air them, for they were by reputation the bravest men in France. A close scrutiny, however, would have revealed that those who went for the ride were slightly pallid upon dismounting. As soon as their curiosity was satisfied as to the motorcycles, the musketeers began to clamor for a demonstration of the revolvers. They became so insistent that Porthos had set up a target in the courtyard, and was about to empty his revolver in its general direction when M. de Treville appeared, and making a sign for the cyclists to follow him he entered his carriage and drove in the direction of the Louvre. Athos, Porthos, Aramis, d'Artagnan, and Clive again mounted their motorcycles and followed the carriage, five abreast where the streets were wide enough to permit it.

Word of the expected visit of the American had also reached the Louvre, where the courtiers and officers had gathered at convenient windows, and some had even taken places in the courtyard to get a better view of the strange vehicle he was said to have. The roar of the five motors could be heard while they were still at some distance from the Louvre, and a murmur of excitement arose from the assembled courtiers. The king, who had been waiting in his own chambers, could suppress his curiosity no longer upon hearing this, and he marched out into the main reception hall. Much to his chagrin he passed through the hall unnoticed by the courtiers who were actually pressing each other rudely in order to gain an advantage at the windows. He paused before the window that afforded the best view of the courtyard, and after standing several moments, unnoticed by the group before this window, he demanded:

"Does the king of France command only the backs of his subjects?"

THE group at the window immediately melted away, bowing low in respect for his majesty, for the king of France was at that time in a position to grant favors to his courtiers. The king then walked to the center of the window and gazed out into the courtyard, just as Treville's carriage, with its motorized escort entered the main gate. If this royal audience was not awed by the sound of the motorcycles it was amazed by the sight of these strange vehicles.

"Ventre-saint-gris!" exclaimed the king. "This fellow must be the devil himself!" Similar remarks were being passed by the other spectators, and the consensus of opinion had it that Clive was not human—some saying he was a disciple of Satan, while others were of the opinion that he was a beneficent sorcerer. The latter school was composed mostly of the ladies of the court who, even at that distance, could observe Clive's fine appearance, while the former group was mostly the cardinalist element of the court.

Seeing the king standing in the window, the five cyclists dismounted and bowed low. The king nodded his approval, and called down to them requesting them to come up to the reception hall, and to bring one of the machines with them. They placed four of the motorcycles, therefore, in the custody of the musketeers that happened to be on duty at the Louvre at the time, and summoning all the servants

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that happened to be within hailing distance to do the actual lifting, carried the remaining machine up the stairs to the main hall.

Before entering the building, Clive saw a figure at one of the higher windows. This figure was hardly more than a shadow, but Clive immediately recognized the feminine form, and he fixed his eyes hungrily upon this window. The queen had more prudence than her American admirer, however, and as soon as the latter looked up at her she vanished from his view. The king had not missed the part Clive played in this short drama, and he became immediately suspicious of the American. M. de Treville also observed Clive's rapt gaze in the direction of the queen's quarters, and fearing the king would notice it he called to Clive.

"Come Monsieur Clive," he said; "the king is waiting for us." And then as they were walking up the stairs he added in a low voice: "Louis XIII is very jealous of the queen, it would be well for you to be prepared to tell him upon what you were gazing so attentively just now if he should ask you."

Clive's face flushed visibly. "Thank you, Monsieur," he said. Arriving in the reception hall a sight greeted Clive's eyes that even outdid the million dollar productions arising in Hollywood. At the far end of the room sat the king on his throne. The seat on the king's left was vacant—this was the first feature that struck Clive's eye. Distributed in numerous small groups about the hall stood the courtiers, each trying to outdo the others in the mater of costume, and all trying to outshine the sun. All eyes were turned toward the motorcycle that had just been deposited at the head of the stairs. Clive walked over to the machine, and debated a moment the advisability of pushing it the entire length of the hall, under the critical eyes of the assembled spectators, who would look upon this as a task for peasants; yet the servants had left and he could see that he was expected to demonstrate the machine. Upon a sudden impulse he mounted the motorcycle and started the motor.

"A small dose of exhaust fumes won't hurt them much," he said to himself, and he steered the vehicle down the hall, stopping in front of the king. He dismounted, and bowed low before the king, who favored him with a smile and a nod.

"Monsieur Clive," said his majesty, "I have been hearing stirring tales of your prowess as a fighter, but even more of the strange machines and weapons that you have so opportunely produced." The king stopped as though weighing what he was about to say, and then blushing he continued: "Would it be perfectly safe for the king of France to ride for a short distance with you on that odd vehicle?"

CLIVE considered for a moment. "In order to do so," he said, "it would be necessary for your highness to ride behind me, and it is hardly proper that I turn my back upon the king of France."

"But if I ordered you to do so," answered the king proudly, "such action could not be considered anything but proper."

"But your highness forgets," answered Clive, standing stiffly before the king, "I am not one of your subjects, and am, therefore, not accountable to you for your orders. If you will change that order to a request," he continued, "I will be very happy to comply with your wishes."

Clive knew he was sticking his neck out by saying this, but somehow this

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still seemed like a dream to him; a dream from which he could awaken at any time. He felt that if the going got too tough he could fight his way to the streets and once on his motorcycle he could easily reach Amiens where he could swim through the caverns to safety.

The king flushed with anger and stood up as though about to command Clive's arrest, then thinking better of it he said:

"Monsieur it is true you are not one of my subjects, and your presence in my country may need some explaining. The fact remains, however, that you have done a service for France, for which we are grateful, and you shall see that even a king can show his gratitude." If this speech was meant to humiliate Clive it had no such effect, at least not outwardly. The king continued: "Now Monsieur, if you will allow me to mount your machine I would like to try a short ride with you."

"I would be honored to have you ride with me," said Clive as though the first part of the conversation had never been spoken. The two men, king and truck driver mounted the machine, and the king motioned everyone back. This motion was more or less superfluous for the moment the motor was started the spectators pressed themselves tightly against the walls. Clive sent the machine round and round the room, gathering speed as the king gained confidence. When finally they stopped, the king was flushed with excitement, and like a child he did not want to dismount, but wanted to continue riding around the hall. Clive explained to him that the exhaust fumes, which were now becoming quite noticeable, might have a harmful effect upon those present if they became more concentrated.

"In that case, Monsieur," said the king, "we must defer our ride to some other time. For the present will you be so kind as to accompany me to my chambers? I am very curious to hear your story. I shall also ask M. de Treville and my four amazing musketeers to accompany us."

The five men just mentioned were standing near and overhead this last remark, as the king had intended, and followed Clive and the king to the chambers of the latter.

"Now, Monsieur Clive," said the king when they were all seated, "I am sure your story is an interesting one, and since I can not order you to relate it, I request your condescension." Although friendly, the king's voice had an unmistakable undertone of irony. "Before you start, however," he continued, "would you mind telling me what appeared so interesting to you in the east wing, while you were in the courtyard this evening?"

"Oh, yes," said Clive, as though that had been on his mind, "I was going to ask someone if falconry was commonly practiced here in Paris."

"Falconry?" asked the king.

"Yes, your Majesty. Just as I was about to enter the Louvre I glanced up in time to see a falcon, that had just been liberated, pursue a pigeon. The bird escaped, however, by flying into a small window in the building."

THE king seemed immediately absorbed by Clives story. "And the falcon," he asked, "what became of it?"

"The falcon followed the pigeon through the window, but almost immediately returned as though driven out. It then flew over the building and disappeared on the other side." This story of Clive's was not just a product of his imagination, although the incident had occurred at the time he rode into the

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court, and not at the time he had been enchanted by the momentary view of the queen. He had not given the matter much attention at the time, but after Treville's warning he had raked his mind for a plausible story. He knew that he couldn't just tell the king he had been staring at his wife, and then he thought of the falcon incident which had occurred almost directly above the window through which he had seen the queen.

The king appeared to be annoyed and quite upset by Clive's story, and he immediately called for La Chesnaye, his secretary and valet de chambre.

"La Chesnaye," said the king when the secretary had appeared, "do you know of anyone in the palace who has recently taken an interest in falconry?"

"No, sire, that is, no one besides His Eminence," answered the secretary.

"His Eminence!" cried the king. "Does Monsieur le Cardinal, then, take time from his campaigns to devote to training falcons, as one must do to be a falconer?"

"No sire, I thought you knew," said La Chesnaye who acted genuinely surprised. "His Eminence has been acquainting himself with your falcons."

"My falcons!" The king was beside himself, he stormed up and down the room, heaping abuse upon everything and everybody in general, but carefully omitting the name of Richelieu. "If His Eminence has taken up falconry, and so suddenly that he has found need of my falcons, my throne is again tottering under intrigue," he said, after he had calmed down enough to give the matter a reasonable thought. He threw himself into a chair and stared silently at the floor for some time. Rather than being embarrassed by this outburst, Clive had a feeling of relief, since his emotional display put the king in the same category as other mortals. Gradually the attitude of Louis XIII changed, and this change was mirrored in his face. Without looking up from the floor he said:

"Monsieur Clive, you may tell me your story now."

Clive commenced by describing America, the ways of living and the conveniences enjoyed by the American people. He did not mention that he was describing 20th century America, however, for that was the part of the tale which seemed to arouse the most disbelief in his listeners—with the possible exception of the queen who had apparently been impressed by some form of clairvoyance.

"How is it that we haven't heard of these things before?" asked the king. "We have explorers over there now."

"America is a long distance from here," said Clive. He knew that this was a weak answer, but the king seemed satisfied. He resumed his story, and when he told about meeting the musketeers in America the king interrupted him again.

"Did you say that you met Messieurs Athos, Porthos, Aramis, and d'Artagnan in America?" he asked. "How did these gentlemen get there and back in such a short time. I know that it hasn't been over one month since I last heard from them, and besides that I don't remember giving any of my musketeers permission to make such a trip."

"That is the most unbelievable part of my story," said Clive. "There is a cavern near Amiens, which, in some mysterious manner, is connected with my country."

"Ah, yes!" cried the king. "The cavern that you spoke of Treville?"

TREVILLE nodded his head in assent. The king appeared to be perfectly satisfied with this answer.

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"So you see," continued Clive, "it was really the musketeers that found the cavern, and brought me back with them."

"I must visit this cavern," said the king. Clive had finished his story, and no one spoke for some time. Finally the king said:

"Monsieur Clive, we have not much to offer here in France in comparison to the wonderful country you have just described, but you are welcome to stay here as long as you wish, and you are under my official protection while you are here." The king's manner had changed completely, and his attitude toward Clive was now almost benevolent. Clive wondered how long it would be before he changed again.

"I am fascinated by your country, your Majesty," he said, "and I should be disappointed if I could not remain for a protracted visit. In the meantime, I shall be glad to use the knowledge I have gained in my own country for the benefit of the people of France."

"That is very kind of you, Monsieur," said the king. "We shall be happy to have your help. Can you build more of those motorcycles?"

"Well, that is a little out of my line," said Clive, "although I can get your mechanics started in that direction. I have studied, however, the art of healing and surgery as my friends, the musketeers, can testify."

Clive's friends, the musketeers, would probably have liked to withhold their opinions until they discovered the fate of Clive's patients, but he had instilled in them a confidence in himself which remained unshaken. They all testified that they had witnessed a demonstration of Clive's ability, and it was "like nothing they had ever seen before."

"Excellent!" exclaimed the king. "You shall be the royal physician."

This was exactly what Clive wanted. "Now," he thought, "I can be near the queen without danger of suspicion."

"And now, gentlemen," said the king, "you have done a great service for your king and country, and your king, at least, is grateful." He fumbled about in his pockets, finally withdrawing a small leather pouch which appeared to be brim-full of coins. "I know that you gentlemen did what you have done out of loyalty to France, but I also know that musketeers are always in need of money. Here, take this, and don't spend it all in one place," he said, tossing the bag to Athos.

"Ye Gods!" thought Clive, "is that gag that old?"

"As for you, Monsieur," the king said to Clive, "I shall give you an order on the treasury for your remuneration, and I shall have quarters prepared for you here in the palace. As for the services you have already rendered, may this ring serve to remind you of my gratitude." He removed a large, ornate ring from his finger and presented it to Clive. "Keep this ring with you," he continued, "and you will always have the protection of the loyal subjects of the king of France."

LOUIS again summoned La Chesnaye who had resumed his usual post just outside the door of the former. The valet de chambre was given instructions concerning Clive's lodgings, and after a moment of thought he left the room, requesting the American to follow him. After mumbling a few words of gratitude to the king, and requesting the musketeers to accompany him, Clive followed La Chesnaye.

Clive's quarters proved to be a beautifully furnished suite on the street-level floor. The suite had two doors leading to the outside, one leading into the courtyard, and the other communi-

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cating via a short path and a small postern gate with the street.

"Well, I'm doing all right," Clive thought. "I've only studied medicine for three years, and I find myself royal doctor of France."

"These are the quarters of a former physician, who attempted to poison the king—it is thought—and was recently executed," said La Chesnaye. The old man left this thought in Clive's mind as he left the room.

" 'It is thought'," he said to himself: "I wonder who has to think that to have it count against you." He turned to the others who had found a table and were counting out the money the king had given them. They divided the gold coin's into five equal portions, and pushed one of these toward Clive.

"Here is your share, Monsieur," said Athos.

"But the king didn't give that money to me," said Clive.

"All for one and one for all," cried Porthos. "I repeat, you are one of us now."

"Come, my dear Clive," said d'Artagnan, "take your share of the gold and join us, for we know several delightful places where some of it may be spent."

The friends returned to the reception hall long enough to retrieve Clive's motorcycle, and then the five of them roared off on a tour of seventeenth century Parisian night life. This experience reminded Clive of his days as an undergraduate college student, when, with a group of fraternity brothers, he would experiment with the night life of the university city at the end of each examination.

THE days that followed were the happiest Clive had ever experienced. Shortly after his installation as royal physician he made a journey back through the caverns, accompanied by d'Artagnan, and returned with a large supply of medicine and surgical instruments, and a larger supply of books on all scientific subjects, most of them written in French.

The science of mathematics had reached a fairly advanced state, and Clive presented it with Newton's calculus some fourteen years before the birth of this gentleman. To the mathematicians Clive also presented books on mechanical engineering, and electrics. Chemistry was just emerging from the enshrouding mists of alchemy, and it was here that Clive made his biggest contribution by presenting this science with Mendeleeff's Periodic Table. Mineral deposits were located by means of charts that Clive had brought with him, and rich mines were opened in France and Germany. An expedition was in the process of preparation to go into eastern Europe to drill for oil. Clive had enlisted the services of several locksmiths and cartwrights, and others of a mechanical turn, and had set them to work making simple pieces of machinery. All of this was done in such an amazingly short time that even Clive was astounded.

In this time Clive had seen the queen but very little, for she never appeared with the king except upon state occasions, and upon these chance meetings she feigned ignorance of his acquaintanceship, although a certain look always lingered momentarily in her eyes. As an upshot of the pigeon and falcon incident, Clive had heard in a roundabout way that the queen had suffered some persecution at the hands of the cardinal, for what reason he could but guess.

The three cardinalist guards, upon whom Clive had practiced his surgery recovered in very short order, and so amazingly without complications that even Clive was surprised. When the

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report reached His Eminence this minister was actually pleasant with Clive, even though he had harbored enmity toward the American since their first meeting.

"You are indeed a man of superior intelligence, Monsieur," said the cardinal, "and for that reason I intend to disclose to you some of my plans, which are really state secrets."

"That is very kind of you, Your Eminence, but I am not seeking political secrets." Clive was immediately suspicious of the cardinal's about-face in his attitude toward him.

"Ah, yes," replied the cardinal, "but you are intimately concerned with these plans, for they propose to make you a man of destiny!"

"Heil Hitler!" Clive replied sarcastically, and then to himself: "This is undoubtedly the same old oil the dictators of the twentieth century are handing out, but it should be amusing."

"A person of your intelligence can undoubtedly see that one state in Europe would be a much more satisfactory system than the several hundred states that now exist," the cardinal continued. "And with the knowledge you can give the people, and the freedom I can give them, Europe can be a veritable paradise."

"Is that all then that I need do to help bring this about?" asked Clive. "I merely instruct these people in the knowledge of the better things of life?"

"That will come later," beamed the cardinal. "For the present I will need your help in producing arms and fighting equipment to bring about this union. If you will supply me with these things, I will make you the second man in the new order."

"That's what I thought you wanted," said Clive. His eyes flashed with anger as he continued. "I agree that a united Europe would be a very good arrangement, but not a conquered Europe. You are putting the cart before the horse, my friend, the knowledge and instruction must come before union is attempted. I refuse to have anything to do with your plans, and I shall do my best to forget that we ever had this chat. Good day, Monsieur!" Clive marched out of the chambers of the most powerful man in France.

"I believe that you will have changed your mind within a week," the cardinal said, benignly, as Clive passed through the door.

CLIVE had returned to his quarters but a short time before a messenger presented himself at the American's door, and informed him that the king desired an audience with him immediately.

"Must be his gout again," Clive murmured as he picked up his medical kit and followed the messenger. When he entered the apartment of the king, however, he found the latter pacing back and forth, with an occupied, and somewhat worried expression upon his face. Although he saw Clive enter the room, he made no sign of recognition, but continued his pacing as though he were trying to arrive at a weighty decision. Finally he turned to Clive:

"Do you have a remedy for a pain in the stomach?" he asked.

"What sort of pain?" asked Clive.

The king hesitated in another moment of indecision. "Perhaps you had better see her," he said, as though he were speaking to himself. And then: "The queen claims to be stricken with a violent pain in her stomach, enough to make her quite ill. Of course, it can't be very serious, but you know these women, they can't stand the slightest pain."

"Appendicitis!" This was the snap-diagnosis that immediately flashed into

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Clive's mind. He felt like letting his majesty have a taste of a good right fist in the face—but he restrained himself.

"How long has this been going on?" Clive's question was almost a demand. The king was somewhat alarmed by his attitude.

"Since yesterday, but it can't be serious—can it?"

"It's probably a matter of life and death," said Clive. "We must act at once, so if you will lead the way, your highness, there may still be a chance of saving her."

It was but the work of a moment to verify Clive's original surmise, the queen had a bad case of appendicitis. For a moment a feeling of helplessness swept over the young doctor, he realized his own deficiencies in surgical training, and here he was called upon to handle the "hot" appendix of the one person that meant everything to him. For a moment he thought of transporting her through the caverns to the U.S., but immediately realized that to be impossible. He then thought of bringing a surgeon in, and though that was more feasible, the queen would probably not survive until he arrived.

Fortunately Clive had been expecting some such emergency, and had been training some assistants. He now took over a small room in the Louvre and after removing all furniture and tapestries, and scrubbing the room from top to bottom, he converted it to an operating room. When all preparations had been made he went to Anne's chambers, and sending everyone from the room excepting his two assistants he spoke to her in English:

"Anne dear," he said, "what I am about to do you will not understand but you must trust me, and believe that what I do is necessary to save your life."

The queen did not speak, but her wan smile and the light squeeze she gave Clive's hand spoke volume.

THE operation was a success, the appendix had not yet ruptured and the queen progressed without complications. Clive, however, remained at her side constantly for the first twenty-four hours, and returned again as soon as he had snatched a few hours' sleep. In the next few days Clive felt that he had reached the peak of happiness—to be allowed to remain with the queen without question was a new-found paradise, a dream from which he was rudely awakened one week after the operation.

Clive was leaving the queen's chambers when he was accosted by one of the cardinal's messengers.

"Monsieur Clive," he said, "His Eminence the cardinal wishes to see you immediately." Clive was about to tell him to let His Eminence jump in the lake, but he was so happy that he decided to humor Richelieu, and he followed the messenger to the apartments of the cardinal.

"You look very pleased with yourself, Monsieur," said the cardinal. "I am glad to see that you have reconsidered my offer."

"Who says I have reconsidered?" demanded Clive, his brow clouding with anger. "I told you I wanted no part in your schemes, and if that is all you brought me here for, I am ready to leave."

"I am sorry you have taken that attitude again," said the cardinal, "and in that case I must show you something very interesting." He reached in his desk and brought out a small leather case.

"My camera!" exclaimed Clive.

"Oh, you know what this is then," said the cardinal with mock surprise, "then you will understand what this

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is." He handed a slip of paper to the American. Clive took the slip with a trembling hand for he could see that it was a photograph, and he realized the possibilities of his undoing at the hands of the cardinal. "How would you like me to explain to the king what this camera is, and show him that interesting photograph?" Richelieu asked the bewildered American.

The photograph showed Clive sitting at the side of the queen, the latter was sitting up in bed, and the two appeared to be about to embrace.

"Of course," continued the cardinal, "I know that you are completely innocent, but what do you suppose the king will think? And you know that such an action is a crime punishable by death!"

It took several moments for the full realization of his situation to penetrate Clive's mind. He had finally arrived at the situation from which he had so frequently planned his escape. His motorcycle was in a hiding place outside the Louvre and his revolver was at his side. He must fight his way out, and make his way to the caverns at Amiens. But first he must destroy the evidence the cardinal had against the queen. Clive quickly drew the revolver from its holster at his side, and warning His Eminence not to make a sound at the risk of his life, he stuffed a handkerchief in his mouth and then proceeded to tie him to his chair.

THE cardinal's worst enemy could not have called him a coward, but in common with everyone who knew of Clive's revolver he was terrified by the sight of such a deadly weapon, and he permitted the American to bind him firmly without offering any resistance.

When His Eminence was securely bound Clive searched through his desk until he found the damning negative, which he burned along with the photograph, then retrieving his camera he left the room, walking as fast as he dared without attracting any attention. Arriving at his apartments he found Planchet, d'Artagnan's lackey, waiting for him with a message from his master. Clive seized the envelope and tore it open, extracting the message.

"Amiens cut off!" it said. "Fly to the east." It was signed d'A.

"Monsieur d'Artagnan said that you must leave immediately if you are to make good your escape," said Planchet.

"How does d'Artagnan know I must flee?" he asked himself. "Why is Amiens cut off? Is the cardinal behind all this?" These were the thoughts that raced through Clive's mind as he followed Planchet through the garden gate and the postern gate. They passed the house in which Clive had secreted his motorcycle, but Planchet urged the young doctor onward. After what seemed like miles of narrow, winding, filthy streets, Planchet stepped into a doorway, and motioned Clive to follow him. The latter found himself in a small, squalid room which was nearly filled by the figures of the four musketeers and two motorcycles.

"D'Artagnan will accompany you," said Athos when Clive had entered the room, "while Aramis and I will cover your retreat and keep you posted on developments in France. You must leave now as the roads to the east will soon be blocked."

Clive opened his mouth as though to speak, but Athos cut him short: "D'Artagnan will explain as you arrive in safe territory," said the latter. "But you must ride like fury if you wish to escape the Bastille."

Clive recognized one of the motorcycles as his own, and mounting it he roared out of the building behind d'Artagnan. As they approached the east-

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ern entrance to Paris they found the road barricaded, and several of the cardinal's guards stood before the barricade with muskets poised.

"Quick!" cried d'Artagnan, "find cover." And leading the way he pulled his motorcycle into the ditch at the side of the road. Clive followed, and once under cover, the two men unslung their rifles, and carefully started picking off the guards who were well within rifle range, but were not near enough to do any effective shooting with their muskets.

Seeing their companions fall the remaining guards quickly scattered for shelter, and as they scattered, Bazin, Mousqueton and Grimaud appeared from nowhere and proceeded to demolish the barricade, while the two fugitives covered them with their rifles. Waiting only until the lackeys had made good their escape after the road was clear, Clive and d'Artagnan hurriedly remounted, and were soon in open country.

"Monsieur," said Clive, when they were once out of danger, "I am dying of curiosity—tell me how you knew the cardinal was about to gather me in."

"It is very simple, Monsieur," replied d'Artagnan. "The cardinal's messenger stopped for a drink in a tavern in which our companions and I were having dinner. He was imprudent enough to provoke a quarrel with M. Porthos, or it was the other way around—but that is unimportant, and while Porthos was attending to him he lost, temporarily, His Eminence's orders. When he recovered them they were no longer secret."

THE seriousness of his situation was just beginning to make itself known as Clive sped over the beautiful French countryside. His ace in the hole, the cavern at Amiens, which he had always counted upon to pull him out of any situation had been closed to him, and now he was riding even farther away. A feeling of helplessness swept over him, but he was not one to dwell long upon any chance misfortune, and he was soon evolving a plan. The two rode on, Clive deep in thought, and d'Artagnan signing a light-hearted song of his native southland.

As night was beginning to fall they arrived at the Swiss border. By this time Clive's fame had spread over most of western Europe, and he was immediately recognized by the border guard who did not question his passage when Clive showed him the ring Louis XIII had given him.

Once they were well within Switzerland they slackened their pace, and began searching for a suitable inn. This they found without much difficulty, and they welcomed the rest, for they had had a long hard journey, and had fasted since breakfast. The excitement of the day had not dulled their appetites in any way, and when the food was brought they fell to with all the enthusiasm of youth. They were fairly satiated before they even ventured conversation.

"What are your plans now, Monsieur d'Artagnan?" asked Clive, finally.

"Plans? I have no plans—except to stay with you until our comrades can arrange for our safe return to France," replied d'Artagnan.

"Well, I am in the process of giving birth to an idea," said Clive, "and I will need your help, as well as the help of our friends back in Paris, to carry it out."

Clive proceded to unfold his plan. They were to send a message back to the three musketeers, requesting them to send on the expedition that had been organized to search for oil in eastern Europe. They were also to gather up

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all the books, instruments etc., and to bring together all the men Clive had been training—or as many of them as possible—and to send them on. They would go to Bohemia, and continue their studies and building over there. They would wait until His Eminence committed an act of treason against the king, as Clive knew he eventually would, and would then step in with superior fighting equipment and depose the minister. Clive also hoped some day to institute a democratic form of government in France, but he didn't mention these plans to d'Artagnan.

The latter approved of Clive's plans, thinking that since they had to stay away from France anyhow, they might as well be occupied. They soon had located a messenger—a brother of one of the mechanics Clive was training, who for the opportunity of working for the great doctor was willing to risk his life. Clive wrote the message, and after giving the boy instructions on how to elude the cardinal's men, sent him on to Paris in search of Athos.

In due time the various components of the expedition converged upon Berne, where Clive and d'Artagnan had taken temporary residence. They arrived singly or in pairs, all having taken different routes out of France. When finally they stopped coming, Clive learned that those not present had been won over by the force, if not by the gold of the cardinal, and were now engaged in turning out firearms for His Eminence. The drilling equipment arrived in peasant carts, covered by hay or vegetables to hide it from the prying eyes of the cardinalists. Once they were all assembled, they loaded the motorcycles on the carts and the strange caravan set out for Bohemia.

RICHELIEU lost no time getting the manufacture of arms and ammunition under way. These were limited, however, to revolvers and rifles, and to an awkward version of the modern French "75," which he designed himself. Clive had never hinted that there was such a thing as a machine gun, a fact which the cardinal was soon to regret. In the months to follow he saw the king but little, and his persecutions of the queen practically ceased. The king thought little of this lack of attention, in fact he was rather pleased to be free of the annoyances his minister was always causing. The queen, however, intuitively knew that this outward serenity was actually the calm before the storm, and she anticipated future developments with a dread exceeded only by her loathing of the cardinal.

Soon after his arrival in Bohemia, Clive established communication with the queen—carrier pigeon and messenger at first, and short wave radio later on. Due to his absorption in his plans, the cardinal had relaxed his internal spy system somewhat, and Clive found it fairly easy to send one of his technicians into Paris with a short wave transmitter, which he set up in the apartment of Athos. By this method the American was able to keep in constant communication not only with the musketeers, but with the queen, and in this way followed the daily developments on the Paris front.

On his part, Clive had been welcomed into Bohemia practically with open arms, and when he told the rulers of the Bohemians about the cardinal's plans they immediately gave him all the resources of men and materials that he could wish for, and he soon had several machine shops in operation that were turning out guns and the machinery of war. Before long he was producing and refining oil, and his first gasoline motor was completed just about the same time that the first gasoline trickled out of the

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stills. He appropriated several ships of the navy, and set about refitting them, and equipping them with steam engines.

About the time Clive was beginning to feel he had everything well in hand he got an urgent call from Paris. It was the queen, she had slipped out of the Louvre incognito, as she had done so many times in the past few months, to speak with Clive by radio. This time, however, her voice clearly showed anxiety.

"I am worried about France and the king," she said. "Monsieur le Cardinal is now openly insulting his majesty, and it is rumored that he has armed forces all over France ready to seize the kingdom as soon as His Eminence gives the command."

"And what is the king doing about it?" asked Clive.

"Nothing, outwardly. He passes Richelieu's insults off as jokes, when he is around, but when Louis is alone he flies into wild rages, and he seems to think you are the cause of his misfortunes—an obsession that the cardinal has encouraged."

"And you my dear, what kind of treatment have you been receiving?" asked Clive. For a moment Anne didn't answer, and then:

"The cardinal has been making demands of me," she said.

"Demands!" cried Clive. "What sort of demands?"

"Demands which I could not meet and continue to hold my head up as a lady," she replied, "and he threatens all the things that I have feared for France, if I don't comply."

"I have been afraid it would come to this," said Clive. "We must get you out of France, at least until we can once again establish peace, and safety."

"I had hoped you would say that." Anne spoke as though a great burden had been lifted from her mind. "When may I start for Bohemia?"

"I AM afraid Bohemia is out of the question," said Clive, "as much as I would like to have you with me. But our preparations are nearly complete here, and we will be leaving for France within a week. There is but one thing for you to do, and that is to go through the caverns, and let my people take care of you until I can come for you. It will take a lot of courage, Anne dear, courage that I know you have. Now listen carefully, for this is what you must do, but first, is Athos there?"

"He is guarding the front door," she replied.

"He must hear this too, for we will need his help." Soon Athos' voice came through the loud speaker.

"I am ready, Monsieur Clive, to follow you and my queen anywhere," he said.

"Good, I knew I could count on you. Now this is my plan: The queen is to slip out of the Louvre tomorrow at noon, she will meet you and the two of you will proceed to St. Cloud, and conceal yourselves in the chapel until I arrive."

"But Monsieur, are you not in Bohemia?" asked the musketeer.

"Yes, but tomorrow I shall be in Paris," answered Clive.

"You say you shall be here, so I shall expect you, but Mordieu, I wouldn't believe it of the devil himself, when it takes at least three days on a motorcycle with good dry roads, and now the roads are wet and muddy." In spite of his professions of faith, Athos was still dubious.

"But I shan't need the roads," said Clive, enjoying his friend's confusion, "for I shall fly."

"Are you sure you feel perfectly well, Monsieur?" asked the queen.

"Perfectly," Clive laughed, "as you

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shall see tomorrow in the clearing behind the chapel at St. Cloud." He was about to switch off when he had another thought. "You had better bring Porthos and Aramis along to help d'Artagnan with the guns I am bringing, and this will be a good opportunity to use the trailers I sent to you." And then to Anne, he said: "You might leave a note for the king, and tell him that although I may be the cause of his present misfortunes, he shall see that I will be his salvation, politically. Until tomorrow then, good-by and good luck."

Clive had built a small plane as one of his first projects, and had gained the experience in flying necessary to pilot a larger craft. He held a private pilot's license, and this experience was all that he needed. In the meantime he had supervised the construction, from plans he had brought with him, of a ponderous twin motored affair. He had taken it on a test flight the preceding day, and it had performed even better than he had expected. Fortunately he had established refueling bases along the route to France, and he was all ready to start the journey. He called d'Artagnan.

"My friend, how would you like to fly to Paris with me tomorrow on a dangerous mission?" Clive asked him. D'Artagnan had been up with Clive enough to have aviation in his blood.

"Monsieur Clive, there is nothing in the world I would rather do, and as you know, the more dangerous the better I shall like it." A trip to the moon couldn't have pleased d'Artagnan more.

"I know, Monsieur, that is why I said it would be dangerous. We must get the big plane ready tonight for the journey. We will carry about ten of the new machine guns, and as much ammunition as we can safely get off the ground with, and we shall leave tomorrow at dawn."

THE trip to Paris was uneventful for the fliers, but for the people on the ground it was somewhat of a major catastrophy. If the motorcycle trip from Amiens to Paris caused a turmoil, the flight of the giant "winged monster" caused an outright panic, in spite of the fact that Clive flew at a high altitude. His intention had been to cut his motors high over Paris and make a dead-stick landing so as to attract as little attention as possible, but by the time he had sighted the clearing in which he was going to land, the streets were filled with people who were gazing with awe upon the second visitation of Satan.

"Our friends will have their motorcycles with them, as well as the small trailers that I sent to them some time ago," Clive said to d'Artagnan. "As soon as we land we must load these guns and ammunition into two of the trailers. In the third we will set up one of the machine guns, and you will ride in that one and cover their rear as they proceed to the Louvre. You must barricade the Louvre, and protect the life of the king at any cost. I don't think you will have much difficulty holding off any invaders with those machine guns, but you must preserve your ammunition as long as possible. I will operate from our base in Switzerland, and keep you supplied with food and ammunition until reinforcements can reach you from Bohemia. As you know, the boats are leaving this morning, and will probably require more than a week to reach France. M. de Treville's musketeers must meet the boats at Calais, and I shall support any of his advances from the air. Of course you must be with M. de Treville to explain to him the operation of our equipment." D'Artagnan did not speak during this recital, and when Clive had finished he saw an odd expression cross the musketeer's face, but as they were about to land he de-

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voted the remainder of his attention to the job of bringing the big ship in.

As they drew to a stop, three motorcycles pulled out on the field, each one pulling a trailer, and in one of the trailers crouched a fourth figure.

"It is so, Monsieur Clive, again you have done the impossible." Anne was radiant. Clive greeted his friends warmly, but hurriedly, and silently the five men loaded the machine guns into the trailers. They completed this task just as the first of the curious onlookers pushed cautiously into the clearing.

Anne was already seated when Clive climbed in beside her at the controls. She smiled at him as he adjusted her safety belt, and he felt that never had a mortal been created so beautiful. His eyes lingered upon her features for a moment, but through the window he caught sight of the people who were beginning to mill out around the plane. He realized that soon he would be unable to take off, so he gunned his motors, which he had left idling, and at the sound of the roar the people scattered like leaves. With his lessened load Clive easily cleared the trees at the edge of the clearing. The musketeers slipped away unnoticed.

The flight to Amiens seemed much too short to Clive, he barely had time to give the queen all the instructions she would need to find his friends in America, there was no time to tell her what he had in his heart. He nearly gave in to an impulse to go through the caverns with her, but realizing that this would surely mean the loss of his plane, and with it probably the loss of his "cause," he brushed the idea aside. Later he was to regret not obeying this impulse, but he was doing what he thought was right.

THE scene at the cavern was touching. For a long moment Clive held Anne very close, to both of them it seemed goodby forever, but they tried desperately to believe that soon they would be together again.

"It will take courage, Anne dear, to go through there alone," said Clive. "But I know that is one of your strongest virtues." He released her from his embrace, and then guarded the entrance to the cavern while she quickly slipped on the twentieth century bathing suit that he had brought with him. When she was ready to start, Clive strapped a small waterproof bag to her back.

"Dry clothes for you when you reach the other end—American clothes," he explained. He watched her step into the water and disappear into the darkness of the cavern, and again an overpowering impulse seized him and he started in to follow her, but then his mind flashed to his companions who were probably besieged in the Louvre, and depending upon him for their survival. He quickly turned back to his plane, and none too soon for peasants armed with clubs and stones were courageously challenging the "monster."

"YOU arrived just in time d'Artagnan," said Athos as the motorcycles sped toward the Louvre. "His Eminence is about to strike, and I fear the king's life is in danger." D'Artagnan remained silent. "I hope this new gun is as good as Monsieur Clive believes it is," Athos continued. "We shall be greatly outnumbered."

"It is," d'Artagnan said tersely.

"What has come over you d'Artagnan?" asked Athos. "You act as though you aren't at all pleased over the prospect of a good fight."

"I shall tell you later, my dear Athos, but at the present moment it appears as though the fight you just mentioned is at hand."

A small group of men armed with

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Richelieu's new rifles had closed in behind them as they passed, and were in the process of leveling the weapons at the musketeers, when d'Artagnan removed this peril with a short burst from the machine gun he was manning.

"Mordieu!" exclaimed Athos. "What an amazing weapon!"

This occurrence was repeated twice before the musketeers reached the Louvre. To their relief they found that this palace was still being guarded by the king's musketeers of their own company. This meant that the cardinal had not yet struck at the king, but their encounters in the streets had shown them that they were none too soon. The quickly gathered a group of musketeers around them, and d'Artagnan demonstrated the assembly and operation of the machine guns to them. He then stationed a crew with each machine gun at strategic positions about the Louvre, so that every entrance was guarded.

D'Artagnan was just placing the last gun when the staccato of a machine gun was heard in the direction of the main entrance to the Louvre. This was punctuated by sporadic rifle fire, and as d'Artagnan listened there was a burst of rifle fire almost directly below him. At the same moment the crew manning this last gun went into action, and though they were rather awkward at first, their gun was horribly efficient. Soon all ten machine guns were pounding out their grim rhythm, and the would-be attackers were dropping like grain before the reaper.

These men were dressed in a new and odd uniform that gave no hint as to the service or the command. For the most part they were raw recruits, obviously not being the hand-picked warriors of the cardinal's guards. They threw themselves before the withering blast from the machine guns with a fervor that bordered on fanaticism, yet this wanton sacrifice accomplished nothing. Not a man got as far as the main entrance—on the contrary, there was a heap of wounded and dead soldiers completely encircling the Louvre. D'Artagnan, the young man who was already a veteran of several major battles, who had slain any number of foes in hand-to-hand fighting, looked down at the carnage below him and felt sick inside.

The fighting was soon over, someone had sounded retreat, and the scattered remains of the attacking army disappeared as quickly as it had appeared. D'Artagnan left his post to search for his three companions, he walked as though he were in a daze, his face wearing the expression not of a conqueror, but of a person deeply troubled. He found the three musketeers at the main entrance, Athos was talking to one of the attackers who had come under a flag of truce to ask permission to remove their dead and wounded.

"By all means remove them," said the musketeer. "You must turn all their arms over to the king's guards, however."

"Mordieu!" exclaimed Porthos as d'Artagnan came up, "this butchery is distasteful, even though the swine didn't deserve to live."

"But we must not be squeamish, my dear Porthos," said Aramis. "After all, the king still lives, and the Louvre still stands."

"Yes, and at what cost!" D'Artagnan remarked, as though speaking to himself. "This slaughter would have been so unnecessary, had His Eminence never heard of a rifle or a revolver."

"But we might be dead or rotting in a cellar in Amiens, if we had not had the services of these weapons which you deprecate," said Athos, who had just rejoined the others.

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AT THAT moment they heard the drone of Clive's motors overhead, and looking up they saw him dip his wings as he flew low over the Louvre. The four musketeers waved their hats in greeting, and he disappeared to the east. The sound of sporadic rifle fire could be heard in the distance, proceeding from several sections of the city of Paris, indicating that the attack on the Louvre was merely a starting signal for a generalized coup.

"I am beginning to think that it would have been better for us to have died or been trapped in America, than for half of France to die at the hands of the other half." D'Artagnan said this with a seriousness that was strange in this carefree young warrior.

"You may be right, my dear dArtagnan," said Athos, "but the damage is now done, and we must do what we can to restore order, and to preserve the kingdom."

"That is true," replied d'Artagnan, "but if you have found these machine guns deadly, you have only seen the beginning of a series of machines and death-dealing instruments, the efficiency of which can not even be imagined. Richelieu is not so dull as to think victory over such odds would be easy—if he only knew what these odds were."

"I am afraid this is out of the hands of His Eminence by now," said Athos. "He has given guns to the bourgeoisie and peasants, and they have had their taste of blood, and now I fear that blood must flow if the kingdom is to be preserved. I believe the cardinal will be fighting by our side before this matter is settled."

"If I am not mistaken," said Aramis, "your prediction is about to be confirmed, for this appears to be His Eminence arriving now at the gateway." A small company of horsemen, wearing the uniforms of the cardinal's guards had just been halted by the guards at the gate. The company was led by His Eminence himself, who had fastened a flag of truce to his sword, and was waving it impatiently in the face of the musketeer at the gate. The four musketeers cast questioning glances at each other.

"You speak with him, Athos," said d'Artagnan. The others agreed with their young companion, so Athos turned to the man who was restraining the king's minister:

"Allow His Eminence to enter, Monsieur," he said, "but the others must wait there until we come to an agreement, see that they are protected." Then to the cardinal who had wasted no time in entering once he had permission: "To what do we owe the honor of this visit, Monseigneur?"

"I come to place myself under your protection, Messieurs, while I seek to undo the harm I have done to France." The cardinal was almost humble.

"Now you're talking, as M. Clive would say," said d'Artagnan, who had overheard the cardinal's speech. "Without someone like you to lead them, it should be fairly simple to put an end to this foolishness." In his enthusiasm, the young musketeer had forgotten that he had just appointed Athos spokesman, but this turn of events had given him new life, and once again he was the carefree young warrior who had defied the most powerful man in France from his first visit to Paris.

"If you will excuse us, Monseigneur, we must take the precaution of asking for your word as a gentleman that you have no intentions upon the life of the king." Athos disregarded d'Artagnan's interruption.

"Frankly, Monsieur, I did have earlier today, but since learning to what lengths the radicals will go when they

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once get the scent of blood in their nostrils, I am forced to acknowledge my error, and to do everything in my power to rectify my mistakes." The cardinal was indeed humble. "Monsieur Clive was right, education must come first." This last was spoken as though to himself, and then as if he were shaking off a cloak he stood at stiff attention and said: "I swear, upon my honor as a gentleman that I shall dedicate the remainder of my life to the protection of the king and to the welfare of France."

"You have given your word as a gentleman, Monseigneur," said Athos, whose noble manner even eclipsed that of the cardinal. "We know you are indeed a gentleman, but since you admit that you had contemplated taking the life of our king we must relieve you of your weapons, and forbid you to approach the king's quarters until this uprising is quelled, or until his Majesty shall command otherwise."

Richelieu flushed crimson, but unbuckled the sword and revolver that hung at his side, and presented them to Athos. "And my guards, must they also disarm and remain in isolation?" he asked.

"Your Eminence's guards are excellent fighting men, as I have had occasion to learn," smiled Athos. "We shall need them as fighting men. And you shall not be in isolation, Monseigneur, as we will undoubtedly need you to assist Monsieur Clive and Monsieur de Treville in directing military operations, since you are the only man in France who has a complete knowledge of the army."

THAT night d'Artagnan made his way to the hotel of Monsieur de Treville, and found the place barricaded and under heavy guard. The musketeers had captured a supply wagon loaded with rifles and ammunition, and except for numbers were on an equal footing with the revolutionists.

The young Gascon was well known by the musketeers, and was immediately recognized and welcomed in. By the men inside he was looked upon as the bearer of good tidings, and as he passed various groups on his way to the chambers of the captain of the musketeers they fell in behind him, and followed him up the broad stairway. They thronged into Monsieur de Treville's antechamber, and waited with bated breath for the outcome of his conference with this gentleman.

"I have been expecting you, my dear d'Artagnan," said Treville, arising to greet him. "Perhaps you can shed some light upon what has been happening the past few hours. When the attack started we prepared to march to the Louvre to protect the king, but as we were about to leave we observed the attackers retreating, and so reasoned that you were holding strong. I then decided that it would show the better judgment to stay here until I received a message from you."

"Which was a good thing," said d'Artagnan. He then recounted what had occurred during the day, while the captain of the musketeers listened silently. A look of disgust crossed the face of the latter when d'Artagnan spoke of the surrender of the cardinal, but he said:

"You did well, whatever may be His Eminence's faults he is a fine general. France needs him now as never before." Both men were silent for a moment, and then Treville continued: "Has Monsieur Clive any plans that might aid us?" he asked.

"Monsieur Clive's plans are our only hope," said the musketeer. "Fortunately our hopes are well grounded, for if we follow his plans we cannot fail."

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"Your words are well said and encouraging," said the captain. "What must we do to bring this about?"

"We must do two things: the first, and most difficult, will be to teach the musketeers the intimate details of the operation of the military equipment that is on its way here. This will be extremely difficult because we have none of the equipment to demonstrate to them. The second thing we must do is to disguise ourselves and make our way to Calais to receive the equipment when it arrives."

"Bravo! When shall we begin?"

"Time is short, we must begin at once."

THE days that followed immediately were somewhat of a preview of what was to happen about a century and a half later, with the exception that at least a portion of the "people" were well armed. Contrary to the expectations of the musketeers, the loss of the cardinal did not deter the revolutionists—as always occurs in any group, a leader soon appeared. So cunning was he in his strategy that by the end of the second day Paris was completely within his hands, with the exception of the Louvre, and the hotels of some of the nobility who at that date surrounded themselves with warriors. These latter had barricaded themselves within their hotels, and were content to wait for the reinforcements that they were told they could expect. Those who were not so fortunate were promptly executed by the people who had been "born to be persecuted." Many escaped to the country where they knew they would be safe as long as the fighting was confined to Paris, aware, however, that soon the whole kingdom would be involved in the conflagration.

As the days passed new units of the revolutionist army converged upon Paris from the provinces. This city became a nightmare of pillage and plunder, shops were looted, and food supplies that normally would have lasted for weeks were soon exhausted. When this occurred the natural course was toward the fountainhead of supply in the country.

Two weeks after the beginning of the revolution an army of the revolutionists assembled at the west gate of Paris. They were a bedraggled lot, the new uniforms that had been so impressive that first day were now grimy and torn. The fanatic gleam that had fired their eyes was now blurred by the watery sign of drunken excess. Many of them had lost the fine weapons the cardinal had given to them, and had armed themselves with what swords and muskets they could find. They were not prepared to fight a major battle, and they knew it, but as they well knew, their past deeds had so overawed the people of France that they expected practically no opposition. Their mission was to plunder the surrounding country, to satiate the bellies that had quickly become accustomed to food and wine. The army of the revolution had degenerated into a band of plundering brigands.

Nevertheless, they made an impressive showing as they marched forth from Paris. As their blood began to circulate and carry the fresh morning air to their tissues, and carry the alcohol out, a semblance of military appearance was restored to the ranks. In close formation they marched westward into the rich farm land in that direction. They had proceeded scarcely a mile when they were abruptly halted, for in the road ahead, and scattered through the fields on both sides of the road, were a number of monstrous machines. None of the soldiers had seen anything like this before; in fact, no one

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in the world was destined to see machines like this for over three hundred years to come. As the column halted the machines began to move forward, closing in on them from the front, and at intervals firing their guns over the heads of the confused revolutionists. The latter broke ranks in panic, and fled to the rear, but their flight was short-lived for the huge machines were also lumbering up from that direction, they were completely surrounded by the monsters.

THEN appeared what the revolutionists thought to be a new menace, Clive's plane flew in low and dropped an object in the midst of the soldiers, many of whom were prostrate now, resigned to their fate, and expecting to be carried off by the immense vulture that had borne down upon them, screaming like the damned. The vulture left, however, without leaving any casualties, and the bewildered witnesses turned their attention to the object it had dropped. This object consisted of a leather pouch, which had been attached to one corner of the flag of France, and it was now reposing on the ground in the center of a wide circle of the wondering men—none of whom dared approach near enough to examine it.

"Well, pick it up and open it!" boomed an enormous voice from an amplifier in one of the tanks. In their haste to obey this order, the former circle collapsed in a scramble toward the pouch.

One of the men finally got it open and extracted a piece of parchment from within. He looked at it, puzzled, for a moment then passed it on to the next man, who repeated the performance, and after it had passed through several hands it finally reached a man who had a smattering of education. He examined it closely for a moment, and then to the insistent demands of his companions he read aloud, as follows:

"Men of France, we command you to put down your arms, and return to your peaceful walks of life. France has suffered sorely by your acts, but we intend to punish you only by the hardships your deeds have brought upon yourselves. You have no choice other than to obey, for unless you do you shall be immediately executed. (signed) Louis."

It took some time for the message to travel back to the men on the far edges of the circle, and while it was moving by word of mouth, a murmur of anger arose from those who had heard, which grew louder and more threatening until a voice was heard to shout:

"Down with Louis! Down with the kingdom! Freedom for the people!"

This cry was taken up by others until even those who had but a few moments before nearly died of fright, were shouting for the head of the king. They had forgotten the machines that surrounded them in a menacing circle, and the great "vulture" that had dived upon them a few moments before, they remembered only the years of oppression, and the relatively few days of new-found freedom and plenty. Their memories were refreshed, however, by the blast from a cannon that was mounted on one of the tanks. Once again the voice was heard through the amplifier:

"Drop your arms immediately, and return to Paris or we shall carry out our orders to execute you." The voice showed unmistakable signs of impatience.

An immediate hush fell over the assembled army, and each man looked to see what his neighbor was going to do. Some prepared to follow the orders, while others stood like puppets waiting for someone to man the strings.

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One who had some of the foolhardiness that they all had possessed a few days earlier, threw his rifle to his shoulder and fired point blank at the nearest tank, others followed suit, and soon bullets were bouncing harmlessly off the impenetrable armor of the tanks.

"That is an encouraging sight," said d'Artagnan, who was piloting the tank that was equipped with the amplifier. "At least it shows that the French people have not degenerated to the point that they have lost the courage to fight for what they think is right."

"Encouraging, yes, but inconvenient for us for we may be forced to kill some of them before they obey the king's command," said Athos, who was manning the guns of the tank.

THERE was a slight pause in the firing after the first volley, and d'Artagnan's tank moved forward, suddenly spouting flames that mushroomed out thirty feet in front of the machine. Once again panic seized the revolutionists, for here was a menace that they could understand. Others of the tanks followed the lead of the first, forming a ring of flame around the stricken army.

"Put down your arms," boomed the voice from the amplifier of the tank that was moving relentlessly forward.

This time there was no hesitation, and once the cardinal's rifles were reposing on the ground the flames were cut off. By means of the amplifier further instructions were given, and soon a long column of disarmed and bedraggled men were returning toward Paris, each one having undergone a thorough inspection for hidden arms by some of the king's musketeers, who had dismounted from the tanks for this purpose.

Seeing that his support was no longer needed from the air, Clive landed his plane in a nearby field, and then walked over to where his companions were supervising the inspection of the last of the army of the revolution. He was greeted by Athos:

"My dear Clive," said the latter, "you have ended our revolution more easily than we were embroiled in it by His Eminence."

"Yeah," was his terse reply.

"You do not seem well pleased, Monsieur," continued the musketeer. "Does it not gratify you to see the dogs lay down their arms so easily, without having to waste more ammunition on them?"

"Maybe I'm a sissy," said Clive, "but the only gratification I can get is in the thought that a lot more might have been killed." He continued as though he were talking to himself: "It was my fault that this whole mess started, otherwise I would have been there cheering for those poor devils who were fighting for their freedom—even though they were misguided and made a horrible debacle of their revolution."

"After visiting in your country M. Clive I believe I can understand how you feel," said Athos. "But my dear friend, please don't make the mistake of saying such a thing in the hearing of the king or His Eminence," he cautioned.

"Thanks for the tip," he answered, "but I'll be satisfied if I never see either one of them again." At that moment d'Artagnan, Porthos, and Aramis joined them, and after exchanging congratulations, Clive addressed the four musketeers:

"My friends, you have seen what terrible destruction I have been instrumental in bringing to your countrymen, in spite of the fact that I wanted to bring only the good things from my time and country. I have created such powerful weapons that the man that

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controls these weapons controls the world. That is too much power for a single mortal, and I want to remove the temptation before any more damage is done. I want you, therefore, to give me your solemn word as gentlemen that you will help me destroy these monsters of my creation, and that nothing will deter you."

AN EXPRESSION of relief passed over the features of the four men, and they readily agreed. They had even a greater respect for the might of the machines, than did Clive, a respect that was almost superstition, and they also knew that they had only given His Eminence a temporary set-back, in spite of his professions of good faith. As long as the machines existed he would not rest until they were his, and these men were determined that this temptation would not be placed in his way.

"We must dispose of this equipment without a trace remaining," Clive continued, "and the best way to do that is to put it back on the ship that brought it, and scuttle the ship. Then I must have the factories that built it completely destroyed, along with the plans and records, and the men that built it must be sworn to secrecy."

"Good," said d'Artagnan. "When do we start?"

"Don't be impatient, my dear d'Artagnan," Athos remonstrated. "Our success here today has not entirely smothered the rebellion — it is still smoldering in many cities, and may break out at any time. We must not give up our weapons when our job is only half finished."

"That's right," agreed Clive, "and while you are mopping up with the tanks, d'Artagnan and I will fly back to Bohemia, and liquidate our business there."

THEY had been flying about two hours when Clive attempted to contact his base in Bohemia by short wave. When his call was finally answered, the voice that came through the head phones sounded strained and excited, and was partially drowned out by the sound of gunfire at close range.

"What in the world is going on?" Clive almost shouted in his microphone.

"It is the cardinal's men," came the voice. "They came this morning and tried to buy us out. When we wouldn't deal with them they attempted to take over by force. They have us surrounded, and have killed all but five of us—we can't hold out much longer."

"If they had you surrounded they must be barricaded in the steel mill. All of the mills and factories are mined, and can be blown up by closing a master switch there in the office. If you will slide the panel back above my desk you will find that switch. Before you do that, though, collect all the plans and records and books together and burn them, then close the master switch, set fire to the office, and get yourselves out of danger. And on your way to refueling base number one see that the mines are closed, and the oil well destroyed. Do you understand what I have said?"

"Yes, Monsieur, but it seems a shame to destroy everything after—"

"Yes," Clive interrupted, "but it would be more of a shame if that ever fell into the hands of the cardinal."

"Yes, Monsieur," and the voice trailed off, but the sound of gunfire could still be heard. After a short time the voice again came through the ear phones:

"Monsieur Clive."

"Yes," answered the American.

"The books and records are now burning, and I am ready to close the switch."

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"Good. Before you pull that switch, you all had better get down flat on the floor to protect yourselves from pieces of flying steel—you can tie a piece of cord to the switch, and pull it from the floor. Don't try to leave the office until the pieces that go up have had time to come back down."

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Good luck to you."

In a moment a tremendous explosion was heard, and then the station cut off. Clive tried aimlessly to pick them up again, knowing, however, that the transmitter had been damaged by the explosion.

"All we can do now is get out there as soon as we can, and give them what help they need," he said.

Several hours later d'Artagnan called Clive's attention to a column of dense black smoke arising in the distance ahead of them.

"Look, Monsieur Clive," he said, "I have never seen such black smoke, that is not ordinary fire. I wonder what it could be."

"That is a good sign, my dear d'Artagnan, that means that our friends survived the explosion and have proceeded at least as far as our oil well, which you see burning."

A SHORT time later they flew over refueling base number one, and Clive circled the field to make a landing. As he came in for a landing, however, he suddenly changed his mind, and giving the motors a full throttle he soon regained flying speed. Once more he circled the field.

"That's strange," he remarked. "Someone should be out there to meet us—they always are."

At that moment d'Artagnan sighted something. "Look!" he shouted. "In among those trees down there." Clive looked in the direction in which the musketeer was pointing.

"What is it?" he asked.

"There are men down there, hiding in the trees, and I'm sure I saw the barrel of a rifle showing through that clump of foliage."

"Are you sure?" Almost in answer to this question, several puffs of smoke mushroomed out from the clump that d'Artagnan had indicated, and the sound of rifle fire could be faintly heard above the roar of the motors. This was answer enough for Clive, he maneuvered the ship away from there at once. The column of smoke could still be seen pouring into the air, and Clive pointed the nose of the plane in that direction.

"That well is burning too strong to have been burning very long," he said. "If it were our men that started the fire, they haven't had time to reach the refueling base, and we may be able to intercept them along the way. I hate to think what will happen to them if they do reach the refueling base."

They flew low over the roadway that led in the direction of the fire, and both kept their eyes glued to the ground for some sign of the loyal mechanics, hoping to find them alive, but fearing that they would find only their corpses along the road. Their search was soon rewarded, for suddenly three men burst from the foliage that bordered the roadway, and stood waving their arms wildly, trying to attract the attention of the flyers. About a mile further down the road Clive could see a band of horsemen moving toward the three men. Sizing up the situation he knew that whatever he did he would have to do quickly, if he were to save the lives of his friends. He looked about for a place to land, but could see nothing suitable except the road, and here the foliage that has been mentioned, offered an obstacle. He examined this closely

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and decided that he would take a chance on it being low enough to pass under the wings of the plane. He cut the motors and landed, his wing-tips just brushing over the top-most green tips of the bordering bushes.

AS SOON as the wheels touched the ground, d'Artagnan had the door open, and the three men, who had run along behind until the plane stopped, tumbled inside. The horsemen were now in sight, and were bearing down upon them at full speed. Clive gunned the motors, and the plane moved directly toward them. As soon as the plane had flying speed Clive nosed it off the ground, but kept the landing gear just a few feet above the roadway. Seeing this ominous machine coming at them with the speed of a demon, the horsemen disbanded and fled into the fields. Clive's passengers laughed like children at this awkward retreat.

"Let that be a lesson to you," said Clive in English. "If I had any bombs I'd really give you something to remember." Then turning to the newcomers he asked, "What has become of your two companions?"

"They turned out to be cardinalists," said the one who had been the radio operator, "and when we started to blow up the place they attempted to stop us, and we had to do away with them."

"Were you able to carry out all my instructions?" asked Clive.

"His Eminence's men were so many in number that we had to stay together for protection, and we had to choose between the mines and the oil well, since we were on foot in order to keep under cover while escaping. We felt that the oil well was of most importance, because they could easily retunnel the mines, and besides, they haven't the equipment to handle the ore," continued the radio technician.

"That was a wise choice," said Clive, "and you men are to be congratulated upon what you have done for France, even though the king and Richelieu may not look upon it that way."

By this time they were winging toward Paris. As they passed over refueling base number one they could see a number of men on the field below, making no pretense at concealment. Again they could see wisps of smoke puff out from the rifles the men were pointing in their direction, but the plane was flying at such an altitude that there was no danger of being hit.

"Have you any idea how the cardinal got so many men out here?" Clive asked.

"Yes, Monsieur, they came by boat."

"Good," said Clive. "That means that they have not had time to reach our other refueling bases."

This proved to be correct, and everything was in perfect order at the other bases. Clive and d'Artagnan discharged their passengers at the first base they sighted, and left instructions to dispose of the gasoline, and anything of value to the enemy, and to make their way back to France without attracting any attention. They left the same instructions at the third base and then winged on to Paris.

ARRIVING in Paris, Clive and d'Artagnan learned that their three friends were leading tank divisions in mopping up operations in the provinces. They had been in constant radio communication with Paris, and expected to return within a week. The king had left a message with Monsieur de Treville, requesting Clive to visit him in the Louvre at his earliest convenience.

"Be careful," warned the captain of the musketeer. "Richelieu has made amends with the king, and they have been closeted for the past two days.

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So do not be surprised at any new devilment His Eminence may have hatched."

"Thanks," said Clive. "I can just about imagine what he wants now, and I have a little business here in Paris that will keep me occupied for a few days before I will want to tangle with him. Be ready to bail me out of the Bastile, if you can do that in this country."

"I do not know what that is, Monsieur Clive," said de Treville, "but the best plan is not to let them put you in the Bastile in the first place."

"I'll do my best," he said.

It was a week before Clive had attended to the "little business" he had alluded to. This week was spent in destroying as much as possible the civilization he had brought to France. When he had finished this he accepted the invitation of the king, and astride his motorcycle he made his way to the Louvre. When he arrived at the main gate he was immediately recognized by the guards who were still manning machine guns about the palace, and was allowed to enter without question. Although he had no official military position, Clive was looked upon as the deliverer of France by the musketeers, and he received as much of their respect as the king himself.

He turned his motorcycle over to the group stationed at the gate, and told them to have it ready for him in case he should want to leave in a hurry. He then made his way to the antechamber of Louis XIII, where he was met by La Chesnaye, the king's valet de chambre, who told him the king was anxious to see him, and he could pass in to his Majesty's private chambers immediately.

Louis greeted him with open arms. "My dear Monsieur Clive it is good to see you once more," he dripped. "You have neglected me of late, and I have been suffering fits with my gout, but I guess I should not complain, when you have done it for the good of my kingdom."

"You may rest assured, your Majesty, that I did not desert you by choice. There was a little matter of saving my own skin, and of undoing the damage I had inadvertently done to France. Otherwise I would still be here dispensing pills, and looking after your comforts." Clive wondered why the king had avoided mentioning the queen's disappearance, and he decided that his Majesty was about to ask a favor.

"You will, of course, reoccupy your quarters here in the Louvre now that you have returned, will you not?" continued the king.

"Your hospitality is most gracious," replied Clive, "but I fear that I shall not be able to accept it, for as soon as I finish up a few loose ends here I shall return to my country."

"BUT Monsieur, you can't leave us now when we need you so much—we have some marvelous plans for you." The king's voice expressed a note of alarm.

"And to whom do you refer as 'we'?" asked Clive, impatiently.

"Ah, yes," said the king, as though it had just slipped his mind momentarily, "M. de Richelieu is truly humbled by his part in the recent unpleasantness, and with me he has been making plans that will make complete reparations for the damage done by the revolution, as well as to make France the truly great and wealthy empire she deserves to be."

"I knew I could smell smoke," thought Clive. "These plans couldn't include my tanks, and other equipment of war, could they by any

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chance?" he asked.

"Ah, such foresight, Monsieur, I see our minds run in similar channels," said the king. "It is agreed then that we are to have this equipment for our conquest of England and Prussia?" As though these last words were a signal, the cardinal stepped through the curtains that separated a small closet from the king's chambers. He reminded Clive of a weasel about to invade a rookery.

"I thought you would show up for the killing," Clive said to His Eminence. And then turning back to the king he said: "As for your question, your Majesty, I will say this, my refusal of this very request once nearly cost me my life, and it did take the lives of untold hundreds of your subjects. Now that I am in control of this monster that has wreaked such havoc, I have no intention of turning it once more on the innocent people of Europe. That is my final answer, take it or leave it." The king appeared thunderstricken, while Richelieu stiffened, the feline smirk leaving his features in the cruel, cold mask of the professional executioner.

"Monsieur," said the latter, "I have here two documents. One is an order making you governor of England, under His Majesty, King Louis XIII of France, the other is an order for your arrest and execution upon the charge of abducting Her Highness, the Queen. You have your choice, and may I say that this time I have my guards just outside the door."

"You already have my answer, Monsieur," said Clive, defiantly, "but if you wish to see Her Highness, the Queen, again you had better defer my execution until I can return her to France." Richelieu looked at the king, this was a matter for Louis to decide, but the latter looked at his minister as though trying to read an answer in his face.

"You can tell who's bossing this league," thought Clive.

"You must bear in mind, Your Majesty, that the queen deserted you when you were facing your darkest hour," said the cardinal.

"Perhaps it would be well for you to tell the part you played in the queen's so-called 'desertion'," Clive interrupted. "Tell His Majesty about the open threats you made upon her life, tell him—"

"E n o u g h !" shouted Richelieu. "Guards, arrest this man!"

DOORS flew open on both sides of the room, and the cardinal's guards poured into the room. Clive jumped backward toward the door he had entered, which still remained closed, and seizing a small object from his pocket he dashed it to the floor. There was a tinkle of breaking glass, accompanied by a mild detonation, and the room was immediately filled with a suffocating, blinding vapor. The guards stopped in their tracks, and Clive turned his attention toward the closed door—it had been locked from without. Two well-placed shots from his revolver destroyed the lock, and in a moment he was bounding down the stairs three at a time, toward the courtyard where his motorcycle awaited him. He arrived in time to see his musketeer friends standing off a group of His Eminence's guards. He immediately lent his assistance, and plunged into the melee with his revolver blazing in one hand, and his saber flashing in the other. The attackers were soon overpowered, and Clive motored away from the Louvre, throttle wide open.

"Well, this is it," he said to himself, as he made his way to the northern gates of Paris. The moment he came in sight of this gate, however, he could

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see that the way was blocked, the cardinal was determined this time that the American should not escape. Now he was alone, without the assistance of the faithful lackeys that had taken him through the barricade before. He swung his motorcycle around, there was still one chance, the plane, and he raced toward the place where he had it secreted. He had left the plane guarded by a machine-gun crew, and as he neared the clearing where it rested he heard the staccato of machine-gun fire.

"Good," he said to himself, "at least the cardinal hasn't cut off that means of escape as yet." He burst into the clearing and raced toward the plane under the protective fire of the gun crew. He found d'Artagnan in charge of the crew, and they were standing off a handful of the cardinalist guards who were sniping from behind a low wall at the edge of the clearing.

"Nice work, my dear d'Artagnan," he called out. "Now if you will take charge of the gun in the plane, we will all leave as soon as I get the motors started."

The motors started without any trouble, and as soon as they were warmed up sufficiently Clive signalled to the remainder of the crew on the ground, who clambered aboard, and the plane roared down the field and off the ground amid a few desultory shots from the attackers.

IN LESS than an hour they were flying over Amiens, and Clive circled low to land near the cavern, but once again Richelieu had him checkmated for there was a large company of guards stationed at the entrance to the cavern. They had built up a crude fortification, and were prepared to withstand any abortive attempt by a ground force to penetrate the entrance. Seeing this, Clive gunned his motors and climbed once again to a safe altitude.

"There's only one way to get past that guard," he said. "I'll have to get hold of one of the tanks."

"Monsieur Athos has four tanks in his command, and he is campaigning near Lille, not far north of here," said d'Artagnan.

"Good," said Clive. "I will get in touch with him." He switched on his radio, and almost immediately he heard his call signal come through the headphones, it was Athos' voice he heard.

"Come in, my dear Athos. Where are you?" he asked.

"We are on the road just north of Amiens, and we can see your flying machine circling above the city," came Athos' voice through the receiver. "We have already heard of your flight from Paris. Can we be of any assistance to you?"

"Providence must have sent you, my friend, as I was just about to search for you," said Clive. "Stop by that field ahead of you, it looks like a good spot for a landing."

The tanks were lumbering up to the field about the same time that Clive brought his plane to a landing. The occupants of this strange array of vehicles dismounted for mutual greetings.

"How goes the campaign, Monsieur Athos?" asked Clive.

"I have found the northern provinces in very good order, Monsieur Clive, and I am at present returning to Paris," replied the musketeer.

"Do you intend taking the tanks into Paris with you?" asked Clive.

"Yes, Messieurs Porthos and Aramis were to meet me in Paris, and if no more word of uprisings came we were to return to Calais and dispose of the equipment as we had planned," Athos replied.

"Well you must change your plans, my dear Athos, if you do not want to

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see France embroiled in a war with all Europe, for the cardinal is waiting to seize these tanks as soon as they enter Paris," Clive cautioned. "You must warn the others also, so that they will not be caught in His Eminence's trap."

"And what about you, Monsieur, you are fleeing when you have it in your power to make others flee?" asked Athos.

"Let's not say 'fleeing,'" said Clive, "but rather 'leaving by choice'. I fear that no matter how good my intentions, as long as I am here I will always be a menace to France. Perhaps when this mess has been forgotten I shall return for a visit, but for the present I will borrow one of your tanks, and take my leave."

"AND her Majesty, the queen, Monsieur, will you not bring her back to us?" the musketeer asked anxiously. Clive felt his face flush to the ears. He would have preferred no mention of this matter, but after all, this was an important problem as the queen was dear to the hearts of the musketeers.

"I shall certainly bring her back, my dear Athos, if she wishes to return. For this reason you must keep one radio set, and when I return I will send you a message, and you can come and get her." This seemed to satisfy the musketeers, for they had little doubt that the queen would want to return.

"If I am successful in gaining the entrance to the cavern, destroy my plane, and then come and get the tank, and destroy it," Clive continued as he climbed into one of the machines. "Farewell, my dear friends, I shall treasure every memory I have of you, and shall look forward to a future visit with you." With the farewells of the musketeers still ringing in his ears, Clive maneuvered the tank toward the cavern.

With the tank it was an easy matter to destroy the fortifications at the entrance to the cavern, and to scatter the defenders. Clive ran the tank right into the cavern's portal to prevent attack from the rear. He quickly shed his clothes and plunged into the stream of water. He had proceeded to where the water was deep enough to start swimming, when a tremendous explosion rocked the cavern. Pieces of rock splashed in the water nearby, but fortunately none hit him. Looking back, Clive could no longer see any light, the entrance to the cavern had been completely sealed.

"Well that's that," thought Clive. Unconsciously a great weight had been lifted from his mind—there was no longer anything he could do for France, and Anne was less than an hour away.

THE END

★ 'CHUTE TESTS ★

ONE of the chief hazards that confronts parachutists while they are falling to earth is the possibility that they may become unconscious.

To determine the cause of this "blackout," Dr. A. J. Carlson of the University of Chicago and Dr. A. C. Ivy of Northwestern University made some very exhaustive tests using A. H. Starnes, a veteran of over 300 jumps, as their subject. Altogether, Starnes made five jumps in which he carried as much as 115 pounds of instruments and equipment which included a movie camera to record his movements while falling, an oxygen tank and helmet, and a stop watch.

The most grueling jump he made was the one from 18,500 feet when he fell to 2,000 feet before pulling the rip cord. He fell the 16,500 feet in only 71 seconds, which amounts to approximately 158 miles per hour, yet Starnes did not lose consciousness and even indicated that his thought processes were even keener than usual during the fall.

Dr. Ivy and Dr. Carlson thus concluded that loss of consciousness was caused by the fear, excitement and other mental reactions of the new jumpers and not by the jump itself. Their recommendation was that the smaller auxiliary anti-spin chute be put on all parachutes since it tends to reduce the violent whirls and twists which bring on the blackout in chutists.

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RADIUM

A CHEMICAL element which has caused a whole new branch of science to be written, found by mistake and applied to something entirely different than that purpose for which it was searched for is the amazing history of the substance called radium. Radium as a chemical has no real distinct properties. It followed exactly all predictions made about it and chemists have a very amazing way of knowing so much about a substance before it is found, so it made no stir on that account. Both salts of radium and radium itself have been prepared, and since the salts are somewhat easier to handle, they are used more.

The substance was discovered by that shining light of chemistry, Madame Curie, after she and her husband had detected its properties in the substance polonium. What they were looking for and found was a bombshell to the physicists and chemists. A powerful substance, which threw off rays in great quantity and in an unknown manner was the impetus to the science of radioactivity. The first achievement in this field was that of the great chemist Roentgen and the rays were called X-rays by him. A friend of his, Henri Becquerel, told the Curies about this strange action and they investigated. They found that radium was located in certain coal deposits and with great effort they prepared it along with polonium. They found that radium was the middle of a radioactive series. Radium was a disintegration product of uranium and that after a while, a good long while, radium ceases to be radium, but degenerates into a type of lead in the meanwhile giving up such products as niton, a rare gas and other substances.

The great cost of radium is justified. It is difficult to find, even more difficult to extract. The price of one gram, a weight equal to one-thirtieth of an ounce, is over one hundred thousand dollars. Since the rays of radium are very powerful and penetrating, it was thought that radium would kill all germs and rid mankind of disease. This did not occur. Some of the first patients felt quite well after exposure to it, but after that, quite a few died from the effects and more went blind. It is now known that radium will kill germs, but also the body and human tissue if exposure is long enough. Radium is now used extensively in treatment of cancer and in the manufacture of luminescent paint after some zinc sulfide has been added.

The science of radioactivity has grown up around the properties of radium and many of its features have been incorporated into the present atomic theory. One of the most interesting aspects of the entire of the science is the fact that radium will not ever cease to give off its remarkable rays. In a period of two thousand years, radium quantities are decreased by one-half, but there is always the other half and the result is that it never completely disappears. Radium also has heating qualities. This may be due to the flying off of the particles, but the matter is not particularly well understood. It can be said that there is no substance which caused a greater frenzy than this one, and no other which has been so useful to theoretical physical chemistry.

WHAT IS VACCINATION?

WE HAVE all heard of a vaccination, but few of us really know of what it consists. When we are vaccinated against smallpox, for example, a small amount of some fluid containing "attenuated" viruses of smallpox is injected into the blood stream. Attenuated viruses are those which have lost their ability to produce the disease very effectively. When these viruses get into our blood stream, we produce antibodies; these are certain types of cells that have the ability to fight off the viruses. Since our body now possesses antibodies like these, we are considered immune to this particular disease.

Another type of protection against disease is brought about by a substance called a "toxoid." This toxoid consists of some of the toxin or poison that is secreted by the organism which causes diphtheria and also a small amount of formaldehyde. This chemical has the property of causing the toxin to lose its poisonous properties and thereby its ability to produce disease. When the toxoid is injected into the body of a person, an antitoxin is produced against the disease, diphtheria. In this manner a person is immunized against diphtheria without contracting the disease. Of course, it is of some importance to know that if a person has a disease and recovers from it he will be immune to the particular disease for the rest of his life. Only in rare cases will a person contract the same disease more than once.

Protection against diphtheria may be obtained in another manner. Instead of injecting a person with the toxoid and letting his body produce an antitoxin, we inject already prepared antitoxin. In this way a person's body is not required to build up his own antitoxin. An already made antitoxin is obtained by taking the blood serum of an animal who has recovered from diphtheria.

These methods are most widely used by doctors in giving their patients protection against disease; other methods may be used but they are of lesser importance.

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When statues come to life, that's more than Lefty Feep wants to monkey with — even for rubies!

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The GOON from RANGOON

By ROBERT BLOCH

JACK'S shack was very crowded when I came in to eat. I ordered and got service, then began to nibble away with a newspaper in front of my face. Suddenly a fork tore through the paper and dipped into my dish. A hand reached around and lifted my cup of coffee.

"Hey!" I said.

"Hello," answered Lefty Feep, peering through the hole left by his fork. "Excuse me, please—it is so crowded in here I make a mistake."

The long-faced strand from the fringes of

The Oriental looked superstitiously at the statue . . . as if he expected it to come to life!

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society gave me a disarming smile as he lifted the fork to his lips.

Then "What is this stuff?" Feep exploded, tasting a mouthful.

"Chop suey," I replied.

Lefty Feep put his fork down with a bang.

"Phooey to chop suey!" he announced. "Chow mein gives me a pain. Egg foo yong should never be brung. Rice isn't nice. Tea is not for me. Food Chinese is only grease!"

"Why Lefty—China is an ally of ours," I objected.

"I would not wander to China to look for Dinah," Feep insisted. "Confucius say to stay away."

"What do you know about China?"

Feep frowned. "Well maybe all China is not so bad. Me, I never get high in Shanghai and I never kick the gong in Hongkong. I do not even have a fling in Peking. But there is one place that I cannot stand."

"You can hardly stand anywhere," I muttered under my breath. But aloud I said, "Where is that, Lefty?"

"Why—Rangoon."

"Rangoon? But Rangoon isn't in China. It's in Burma," I told him. "Burma."

"To me Burma is only a shave," said Lefty Feep. "But a pretty close shave at that."

"So you've been to Rangoon, recently? It's occupied by the Japs, isn't it?"

"Wait a minute. I do not say I visit this Rangoon. As a matter of fact, Rangoon sends something here to me. And I do not know about it being occupied by Japs. But there are some kind of demons there, anyway. And they certainly give me a demon-stration."

"What's all this?" I perked up my ears. "You got something from Rangoon, you say? And there's demons mixed up in it?"

"I get plenty," Feep replied. "And I am mixed up in it. It is the damndest Chinese puzzle you ever hear of."

"I didn't hear of it."

"Well, you will—right now," Lefty Feep promised me.

This was my signal to rise. "Some other time," I said. "Right now I've got to see a man about a dog."

"That is just how it starts out with me," Feep said, pushing me firmly back into the chair with the point of his fork.

He speared me into my seat, harpooned me with a baleful glance, and began to wag his tale.

* * *

LIKE I say, it all starts one day when I got to see a man about a dog. The man is a chiropodist and the dog happens to be my left dog which has on it a bunion the size of an onion.

So I move the feet down the street to the office of Doc Lessgland, a toe-twister. Lessgland is a good chiropodist, even though his sole support is heels.

Well, his office is pretty crowded, so I sit down and pick up a copy of one of those 1904 magazines and prepare to find out who wins the World Series or whatever they play those days.

Pretty soon I glance up when the door opens and get an eyeful of the personality who limps in.

"Strike me technicolor!" I mumble. "If it isn't Dr. Fu Manchu in person."

At least, it looks like it might be. Because the article in question is six feet three of China Boy . . . an extremely yellow fellow with a bald head and the kind of a stomach you see on these statues. As a matter of fact, I almost get up and stick some incense in his ears just to see if he lights up.

But do not mistake me—I have noth-

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ing but sympathy for this Chinese character, because he certainly looks as though he is suffering from a bad case of the Limehouse Blues.

He hobbles in the door and sits down in a chair with a groan and a scream. The groan comes from him, but the scream comes from the chair-springs when they feel the torture of 300 lbs. of China-ware resting on them.

I look at the foot of this gentle oriental and see the big bandage and shake my head.

"Tough luck," I observe.

He forces a smile.

"Accidents are no trouble unless they happen," he says.

I take in this Chinese philosophy and go back for more.

"What happens to your foot?" I inquire. "Drop a heavy safe on it?"

"A safe is safe until it is open," he comes back. "But no, it is not a safe that drops upon my humble foot. It is a jewel."

"A jewel?"

"A gem of purest ray serene," he answers.

I SIT there with my mouth open, trying to give my brain some air. Because I am doing some fancy thinking.

Imagine a jewel so big that you hurt your foot when you drop it on your toes! Here, I figure, is a character worth cultivating. Somebody ought to look after a guy's jewels and stuff so he isn't all the time dropping them and hurting himself. Maybe I can get a job hauling around gold bars for this Chinatown Charlie.

"That is too bad," I sympathize. "You should not be such a butterfingers."

"Precious stones may break my bones," he comes back.

"This jewel business interests me for some strange reason," I tell him. "I never figure there are any jewels big enough to hurt anybody. In fact, I would not mind a shower of emeralds or rubies at all."

"But do not misunderstand," purrs the Chinese. "This is not a genuine stone that falls upon my foot."

Aha—it would be like this! He merely drops a counterfeit hunk of glass on his pinkies. I groan with disgust.

"No," he continues. "It is just an imitation, naturally. I am examining it for size—because the real jewel is many times heavier."

The real jewel! There *is* one then! I sit right back up and take plenty of notice.

"Of course, it will be difficult to pry it out of the idol," the Chinese goes on. "And the idol will be offended."

"I would offend anybody for a paltry fortune," I answer.

"But the god of the idol—" says the Chinese. Then he stops and looks at me hard.

"Who are you?" he asks. "I have a feeling you may be sent from Heaven."

"My name is Lefty Feep," I tell him. "And I come here straight from Gorilla Gabface's pool parlor."

"Better still," smiles the Chinese. "Permit me to introduce myself. I am Jack Fu Groan, proprietor of the Hoo Flung Goo Chop Suey Palace."

This surprises me. What does a Chinese hash-house owner have to do with fancy jewelry?

But Jack Fu Groan explains all that in a few short words.

"I realize this may surprise you," he admits. "For nothing surprises like the unexpected. Particulaly if it is startling."

"Cut the double-talk in half," I suggest.

"You see, I have a brother in Ran-

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goon," he tells me.

"Yes, my brother, Wuan Low Groan is high priest of the Great Temple. And now that the cursed Japanese occupy the city, the treasures of the Great Temple are in peril. So my brother has the presence of mind to send the Temple treasures here, to me.

"One of these treasures is the famed idol of the god Squat."

"What?"

"Squat," he says. "And this deity, a giant figure of hammered bronze, has a sacred treasure in its brow—two gigantic pigeon-blood ruby eyes. Two ruby eyes, the size of large apples."

"So why do you wish to squeeze applesauce from the sacred god?" I inquire.

JACK FU GROAN gives me a sweet smile.

"Do not be so stupid as to play dumb and appear ignorant," he suggests. "You and I are enlightened men. We do not believe in superstitions or curses or heathen nonsense.

"Besides, my brother is dead now. Word reaches me today. The treasure is rightfully mine. I do not worship Squat. I do not fear a curse. Why not take the rubies?"

"Why not?" I echo.

"That is why it is fortunate that I meet you. You impress me as a strong, sturdy individual, Mr. Feep."

"I can lick my weight in war stamps," I tell him.

"Then you are precisely the man to assist me. I am too clumsy, I suppose. I order an imitation jewel in advance to substitute for one of the idol's eyes and immediately drop it on my foot. Now that the real idol is here, I shall never succeed in prying out the eyes safely, let alone do all the work of unpacking without some clumsy injury to myself.

"So what do you say, Mr. Feep? Would you care to assist me in securing the rubies? There is a large fee for you if you do."

"Me for a fee," I come back.

"Naturally all this must be kept strictly confidential. It is a secret."

"Silence without violence," I promise.

"Well then." Fu Groan gets up. "Let us be on our way at once. There is no time to lose."

"What about your foot?"

"Some other time. Once I get those rubies in my hands, I shall dance for joy."

"Get ready to step then, brother," I answer. "Because I'm all set to fool with the jewels."

And off we go to the Hoo Flung Goo Chop Suey Palace.

This turns out to be a very dingy-looking vitamin-villa indeed, in a very low neighborhood of town. In fact, it is near Gorilla Gabface's pool hall, which makes the neighborhood extremely vile.

It certainly does not look prosperous from the outside, and there are not enough customers inside to start a game of solitaire. All I see in the shadows is a little dried-up man wearing a greasy tuxedo.

"Any business, Opium?" asks Fu Groan of this little guy.

Opium shakes his head. Fu Groan turns to me and whispers:

"I call him Opium because he's such a dope."

He leads me back between the tables until we get to a little door with a dragon painted on it. He goes through, turns on a light, and beckons me to follow him in.

I enter.

THE room beyond is very large, almost as large as the entire chop

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suey restaurant. And it is filled up to the ceiling with big packing boxes and crates.

"The treasures of the Temple of Squat," Fu Groan whispers. "Vases, figurines, altars, ceremonial hangings, carvings, pottery, urns. A small fortune.

"But who wants a small fortune? You and I are interested in bigger stakes. Let us proceed at once to open the big case over there—the case containing the sacred idol of Squat himself."

"Got any tools?" I say, looking at the packing case. It certainly is a big thing. Opening it will take a chisel at least, but that is nothing to me, because in some circles I am known as quite a chiseler.

"Help yourself," says Fu Groan with a wave of his fat hand. "Chisel, saw, hammer, whatever you want. I urge you to exhibit great care lest you damage the idol."

"I'll do the job lightly and politely," I promise. And set to work.

It is a terrific task, but at last I strip the boards and packing away and the great idol of Squat sits on the floor before us. I stand back in surprise.

Squat is certainly something to look at. He is named very well, being a squatting figure with legs crossed underneath. Even so he must be over five feet tall. He looks not a little like Jack Fu Groan, only with more lard and twice as hard.

He has a very mean face, like a wrestler who gets thrown out of the ring and lands on a spike instead of a lap, and his bronze mouth hangs open, showing big ivory tusks.

But neither I or Fu Groan waste any time looking at his body and face. We stare at the eyes—the two rubies.

There they are, glowing like live coals on either side of Squat's nose. Pigeon-blood rubies, cut in beautiful facets, with two pupils fixed in the eyes so they seem to stare out as if old Squat was alive.

"That's nice ice," I comment to Fu Groan. "I never seen such size in a gem before."

"Perfect, too," Fu Groan pants, getting excited. "They will bring a fortune. Now you must take them out and replace them with these glass imitations."

He scrabbles around in the corner and brings over the hunks of cut glass he wants substituted. They are exact imitations.

"Made from photographs and the description my brother sends me," Fu Groan explains.

Me, I do not give him the benefit of my attention. I am all ready to claw away at the rubies.

But Fu Groan coughs and stops me for a minute.

"OH, BY the way," he says. "You are not superstitious, are you?"

"Yes and no," I tell him. "I do not walk under ladders because they may fall on me. I do not like to have a black cat cross my path because I might stumble over it. I throw salt over my shoulder when I see somebody I don't like behind me—and I don't take it out of the salt-cellar first, either.

"But I do not believe in ghosts, werewolves, vampires, or congressmen."

"That is fine," Fu Groan says. "Because then you will not be bothered by the curse on this idol."

"Curse? I get cursed many a time, but only in crap games."

"This curse is slightly different. It says that whoever removes the stones from the idol of Squat will cause it to come alive and seek its eyes."

"Statues coming alive?" I snicker.

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"That is a lot of gooey hooey. Cigar-store Indians do not smoke and window dummies don't pull down the shades."

"I am glad to see you take that attitude," Fu Groan remarks. "So go ahead and take out the rubies."

"Wait a minute," I remind him. "Now is the time to settle a few details. Such as how much do I get for this and when?"

He smiles.

"How about a hundred dollars?" he suggests.

"For rubies worth a fortune?"

"Right now," he says, waving a handful of bills.

I take them out of his hand. Waving makes me nervous.

"It's a deal," I say. "Maybe I'm just a booby about these rubies, but a bird in the hand is worth two on the lips."

So I reach up and take a tug at the ruby eyes.

This is just an experiment, understand, because I figure I am going to pry them out with a chisel. But the first ruby drops right out in my hand! And then the second one!

I stand there holding them, and almost fall to my knees because of the weight. What is all this? Why should Fu Groan pay me a hundred slugs just to lift out these two stones?

Then I turn around and see the answer.

THE answer is stretching out its bronze legs and standing up. The answer is fumbling with long bronze arms at the empty air. The answer is feeling with groping fingers at its empty eye-sockets.

The answer is that the god Squat is now *alive!*

Alive and kicking!

I nearly catch one below the equator from a bronze foot.

"Ouch!" I remark, jumping two feet and coming down gracefully on my heels.

"Look at him!" I suggest.

Fu Groan is looking. His eyes are popping out of his head just the way the rubies pop out of Squat's.

"It's true—the curse is true—he's alive!" Fu Groan wails.

"I'll say he's alive," I agree, dodging another kick. "But why don't you warn me he's a jitterbug?"

"How would I know that?" Fu Groan comes back. "I've got to get out of here with the jewels before he discovers where they are."

"And leave me alone with this bronze boogie-woogie expert? Not on your life."

"No—on *your* life," Fu Groan tells me. "You take his eyes. Therefore, the curse falls on you. If he gets his eyes back he will kill you. So I suggest you don't let him out of your sight. Take him away—he's all yours."

This statetment brings a rush of grief to my head. Am I going to be saddled with a living bronze statue for a stooge?

This seems to be the program, because Fu Groan suddenly dives for the door with the rubies in his hands. And I can't stop him.

Because I happen to be up on the chandelier at this time, keeping out of the way of Squat, the idol. The idol is far from idle with those bronze feet of his, and I am taking no chances.

So I hang there, the idol gropes around under me, and Fu Groan stands in the doorway, grinning.

"You know," he says, "this reminds me of a story."

"I got no time for jokes," I yell.

"This story isn't a joke. I think it will interest you. The tale is called A NIGHT AT AN INN, by Lord Dun-

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sany. Really a play, to be exact."

"I want help and you give dramatic criticism," I gasp. But Fu Groan goes right on, with another smirk.

"It's about three sailors who steal the eye from an idol—just like this one. The idol comes back and takes his eye, then kills the sailors one by one. How appropriate!"

"How perfectly swell!" I agree, swinging from the chandelier. "Just what I need to cheer me up, too. Grabs for his eye, eh? Well, an eye for an eye, I always say."

Which is appropriate, after all. Because at this moment the idol of Squat suddenly lunges across the room at Jack Fu Groan and makes a snatch at the rubies with his bronze paws.

FU GROAN notices just in time. He whirls out of the door and slams it shut behind him. The idol runs straight into it, being blind.

I can hear Fu Groan chuckling from the hall.

"Hey!" I mention. "Where are you going?"

"Off to make my fortune," calls Fu Groan. "I have the rubies now and you have the idol. Fair enough?"

"But what about my cut?" I ask.

"The hundred dollars is your cut," Fu Groan yells. "Any other cuts you get will come from the idol. Cuts or bruises."

With a dirty chuckle, Fu Groan scrams down the hall.

And I am left hanging in midair with the idol waiting underneath me.

"Now what do I do?" I groan.

"Yes, whattee do? Whatee do?" says a deep voice.

I stare. There is no one else in the room. Only the idol.

The idol!

Sure enough, the deep voice booms again.

"Whattee do?" it says. "You guy got my eye? Yes? No? Maybe? Perhaps? Could be possibly?"

I can hardly believe my ears. But I see the bronze mouth moving and the voice is coming out through the ivory tusks.

"You can talk!" I whisper. "How come?"

"Why not? I alive, yes?"

Which is as good an answer as any.

"Where my eye, you guy?" booms the idol again.

"Haven't got it, pal," I tell Squat. "Might as well give up looking for it."

"How I look for eye when I can't see?" the idol asks.

"Wait a minute." I get an idea here. "Maybe I can help you find your eyes if you let me down."

"You help? Sure, come down one and all. Me no hurt you."

This is not very good grammar but it sounds sweet to me. I hop down from the chandelier and stand in front of Squat.

"Now listen, squattie old pal," I tell him. "I will help you hunt for the eyes but you can't go out searching like this."

"How you meaning?"

"Well, you're too conspicuous that way. If I can dress you up a little and give you a pair of dark glasses you might pass in a crowd—a drunken crowd, anyway. It's worth trying."

Squat takes this all in.

"Then we hunt for guy with eye and I kill him dead to pieces?"

"Sure, sure," I agree. I do not think it is diplomatic to tell Squat I am the guy who filches his pupils from him at this time.

"Let's see what I can find," I suggest.

I WALTZ over to a closet and come back with some of Fu Groan's

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clothes. Lucky he is a 300-pounder, but even so it is a terrific job to stuff the pants and coat over that bronze body.

Squat squirms around a lot, too, not being used to clothes. But I finally get him down and put shoes on him. Then I get another bright idea. I pull out the glass imitation jewels and stick them into the eye-sockets.

"Can you see now?" I ask.

"Sure," Squat booms. "Pretty dark but I see little bit. Little bit must be you."

I rummage around in the bureau drawer, and come up with a pair of dark glasses which I put over the rubies. Then I come across a toupe of Fu Groan's. I put a little rubber band on it and drape it over the idol's ugly mouth like a mustache, to hide the ivory fangs. It helps.

Squat now looks like a big Chinaman. A half-blind one, maybe. But it's more than I hope for at first.

"There we are," I tell him. "Now we can go out and take a look around. But just remember this—let me do the talking. Wherever we go, you keep your trap shut and do as you're told. We don't want to take any risks."

"I catch you," says Squat.

"Remember now," I warn. "Keep quiet."

This is very nice advice, because the words are no sooner out of my yap when the door suddenly opens.

No, it is not Jack Fu Groan coming back with a change of heart and the rubies.

There is a perfect stranger standing in the doorway.

Or rather, a not so perfect stranger. He is dressed like a bum—a particularly sloppy bum. His clothes look like a walking sample display for a ragpicker. The personality himself is as thin as restaurant soup and twice as muddy in the complexion.

But he smiles at me very sweetly and digs into a pocket.

"My card," he says. "Oh, dear, I have mislaid my calling card."

He looks more like he mislaid his sandwich board to me. I do not comment, though. He runs his hands through his pockets — all the way through because of the holes—and then he smiles again. Very apologetic.

"It doesn't matter," he chirps. "You probably know who I am anyway. My name is Jerkfinkle. Otis Jerkfinkle."

"Otis Jerkfinkle," I repeat. "No, I don't know you."

"But you are Mr. Fu Groan, are you not?"

"Yes," I say. "I am not."

"Too bad," says this Jerkfinkle. "I must find Mr. Fu Groan at once. I'm a curator, you know."

"Good," I tell him. "I'm a creditor, myself."

JERKFINKLE stares at Squat in his new clothes.

"That isn't Mr. Fu Groan, by any chance?" he inquires.

"No squeakee English," booms the idol.

"Sorry, brother," I say, pushing Otis Jerkfinkle out of the room. "Some other time."

"It's frightfully important," he insists. "I'm trying to tell you I'm a curator and—"

"Well if he needs any curating done I'll tell him," I snap. And slam the door.

Then I turn around and face Squat. This takes a lot of doing because he is one depressing sight with his dark glasses, his false mustache, and his bronze skin sticking out from the ends of the coat and trousers.

I wish I can figure out some way to get rid of him. In the first place

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I do not wish to spend the rest of my life playing nursemaid to a half-blind living statue. And in the second place, if he ever finds out I am the guy who takes his rubies I will probably spent the rest of my life dead.

It is a terrific problem, but I must shake him loose somehow.

Then I get my inspiration.

Gorilla Gabface!

Here is a character who can dispose of almost anybody. He is the lug who runs a pool hall down the street. He also runs alky, a counterfeiting machine, and anything else you can think of that is more ill than legal.

Ordinarily I stay very far away from Gorilla Gabface and his kind of business affairs, because I am personally very honest ever since I get my diploma from the reform school.

But this is a very special case, and it calls for a fink without too many ethics. So Gorilla Gabface is just the guy, because he thinks ethics is the name of an automobile they make about fifteen years ago.

I make up my mind and motion to Squat.

"Come on, let's go."

He pounds across the floor with his bronze feet.

"Quiet now," I warn him. "Hang onto me. Remember—follow me and keep your trap shut."

"No yap from trap," he grunts. And holding on to my arm, he lumbers out of the chop suey palace and trails after me down the street.

IN SUCH a neighborhood as this nobody pays him much attention. We walk over to the pool parlor in a few minutes.

"Wait here," I suggest, leaving Squat standing on the sidewalk.

I go inside. There are the usual assortment of rats around but I do not see the big cheese himself. So I walk over and poke a character in the short ribs.

"Where's Gabface?" I inquire.

He gives me a look I can do without.

"Don't be dumb!" he snaps. "Where would Gabface be with the big match coming off tonight?"

"What big match?" says I. "Is he getting ready to give somebody the hotfoot?"

"The wrestling match, of course," the guy tells me. "Gabface is over at the gym now training his boy."

All this is strictly a news broadcast to me.

But I figure there is nothing to do but scram back outside, pick up Squat, and head for the gymnasium.

To slice a long story thin, this is just the course of action I take. Ten minutes later I am walking into Liniment Louie's Gymnasium—*No Women Allowed, No Smoking, No Holds Barred.*

And there, sitting next to the ring, is Gorilla Gabface and Liniment Louie. They are jabbering away at each other a mile a minute, and for a while they do not even notice me.

Finally I attract Gorilla Gabface's attention by dropping a quarter on the floor. When he dives for it I step on his fingers and he looks up.

"It's me—Lefty Feep!" I tell him.

He glares.

"Go away, I'm in conference," he says.

"What's the matter, Gabface? I want to talk to you."

"Can't be bothered. I'm all tied up with this promoter."

He points at Liniment Louie. This puzzles me, because Liniment Louie is not much of a promoter—in fact he looks like he doesn't even promote a square meal for a long time.

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"What's all this about a wrestling match?" I ask.

Gabface sneers. "What do you care? Ain't I got enough troubles as it is without telling them to you all over again? Isn't it tough enough that I got a big money fight on tonight and the finest wrestler in the world is under contract to me?"

"That doesn't sound so bad," I say.

"Well it is," snarls Gabface. "The match is tonight, see? And my boy is in swell shape, see? Only I can't get anybody to wrestle with him, see? The other guy backed down, see? And that leaves me in the hole, see?"

I can't see, because he is jabbing me in the eye with his finger.

But I can think—plenty fast.

THIS changes my plans. I suddenly take a good look at Squat, standing over in the corner where I leave him. And the idea comes to me.

"Say," I get out. "That is why I come to see you. I got an opponent for your wrestler."

"You got a what for what?"

A new voice says this. I turn around and look up at six feet six of live beef on the hoof. A great big walking pile-driver is grinning down at me. He wears wrestling trunks and a beard.

"Meet Musclebound Morris," says Gorilla Gabface. "He is my wrestler."

"A pleasure," I wince, holding out my hand. Musclebound Morris grabs it very delicately and tries to tear it off my wrist.

"You wanna wrestle me?" asks Musclebound Morris.

"Not me," I bark hastily. "But I got a Chinese boy to put up against you."

"Put him up and I'll throw him down," says Morris. "Where is he?"

"Over there," I say, pointing at Squat. Gabface and Louie and Musclebound Morris all stare at him.

"That fat slob?" sneers Gabface.

"Looks like he's punchdrunk with those dark glasses," laughs Louie.

"Who's the Goon?" chuckles Musclebound Morris.

"That's who he is," I yell, hastily. "He's Billed as the Goon from Rangoon. Best Wrestler in China."

"I doubt if he could get a half-nelson on a creampuff," says Gorilla Gabface.

"Half-nelson? Look at those arms and legs! He's got something new—the double-nelson," I insist.

"Well," says Louie. "We gotta get somebody."

"Why not?" grins Musclebound Morris. "I'll tie him up into so many knots it'll take three Boy Scouts to get him loose."

"How about a little training exhibition now?" asks Gorilla Gabface.

"No," I say. "He's all set. What's the purse?"

"A hundred," says Gabface.

Ordinarily I would haggle a little, but I am hot to get this opportunity. So I say "OK by me," and arrange the details. Then I walk out with Squat very happy, because tonight Musclebound Morris wrestles the Goon from Rangoon. And unless I miss my guess, I will not be bothered with the living statue any more.

But I miss my guess.

I miss it that night at the wrestling match.

WE GET there early. I buy a pair of trunks for Squat and get him in his dressing room. Outside of that I tell him nothing.

"I fightee tonightee?" he asks.

"Sure," I tell him. But I don't issue any instructions or bulletins. I want him to stay as clumsy as ever, and I know that he can't see more than ten feet.

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So I am very happy when I push him into the ring and the announcer tells the crowd about the main bout between Musclebound Morris and the Goon from Rangoon.

That is the last happiness I have this evening. Because the bell rings, Musclebound and the Goon come out from their corners, and the fight is on.

Musclebound comes out fast.

He goes back faster.

Musclebound comes out again.

He goes back again.

I rub my eyes. What is happening?

It is very simple. The bronze idol of Squat just stands in the center of the ring. He can't see Musclebound until he gets close. When he does spot him, he just lifts up one foot and kicks Musclebound in the breadbasket. And the bronze hoof just naturally knocks Musclebound way back into the corner.

The crowd yells and so do I.

Now Musclebound takes a new position. He comes in ducking. But Squat is ready for him. He picks Musclebound Morris up in his bronze arms and waltzes around for a minute. Then he gets tired of that and starts to squint around. He is looking for something—what, I don't know.

Then I do know. He is merely wondering where he should throw him. He picks a spot about forty feet away and lets fly. Two hundred and fifty pounds of champion wrestler goes hurling across the heads of the crowd and lands right in the balcony seats.

"Hey!" squawked the referee.

Squat looks around, startled, and sees the referee behind him. Naturally, since I tell him nothing, he doesn't understand. The referee is just another wrestler to him. And being lighter, the referee sails sixty feet and lands in the gallery.

"Cut that out!" Gorilla Gabrace yells this advice, climbing through the ropes. Squat heads for him with his bronze arms lunging. He makes one single swoop and scoops up Gabface on the run. He starts to swing him out.

"Stop!" I yell through the ropes.

SQUAT is a very obedient personality. He stops right where he is, and drops Gorilla Gabface on his dome. He drops him kind of hard, because Gabface's head goes right through the canvas floor of the ring. The rest of him is stuck and just wriggles in the air.

It looks very funny, but not to the crowd. They are screaming and yelling and a couple of the boys down front are getting ready to climb into the ring.

I grab Squat's hand fast.

"Come on, we've got to run!" I yelp. And we do. Down the aisle and out of the joint, with the mob at our heels.

"Whatsee?" pants Squat. "Don't me fightee tonightee all rightee?"

"You damn near cookee my goosee," I tell him. "Run faster, you big Goon!"

We hotfoot outside just in time. I dash around the nearest corner. There is a cab waiting.

"In here," I pant. We climb in. The cab moves off.

"Driver," I call. "Take us to—"

"He knows where to go," says a soft voice.

I turn around.

Jack Fu Groan is smiling at me.

There is a revolver in his hand, and the revolver is not smiling. It is just looking at me quite hard with its black little eye.

"That's right," says Jack Fu Groan. "Sit very still. And tell your idol companion to sit still, too. No wrestling or funny business, or I'll fill your teeth with lead."

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I do not go for this suggestion about amateur dentistry, so I sit still and tell Squat to do the same.

"How come?" I ask, as the cab moves along.

"I see the announcement in the paper and I realize who the Goon from Rangoon must be," says Jack Fu Groan.

"That I can figure out," I reply. "But what do you want with Squat?" I inquire. "You tell me to take him away."

"Take away a million dollars? You are so ludicrously absurd as to appear foolishly ridiculous," smiles Fu Groan.

"A million dollars?"

"Perhaps. Some large sum like that. That is what Mr. Otis Jerkfinkle is prepared to offer."

"Jerkfinkle? The guy who looks for you and claims to be a curator?"

"Exactly. Otis Jerkfinkle *is* the curator of a wealthy private museum. Learning that I have this collection of oriental art treasures, he is seeking me out to offer a vast amount of money explicitly for the idol of the god Squat. So I fear I must take Squat off your hands once more, after all."

ABOUT this time we pull up in front of the chop suey joint and get out in the alley. The cabbie can't see the revolver, but I can—so I stand very still, and so does Squat.

We go inside to the little room in back once more. I walk in and Fu Groan follows me. Squat stands outside.

"You get Squat, so why must I squat?" I object. "Let me go now."

"After I make a call to Jerkfinkle and seal the arrangement," purrs Jack Fu Groan. "Meanwhile you will stay here and guard these."

He pulls out the rubies and lays them on the table.

Then he goes out.

"Squat stays outside," he tells me.

"Why not bring the statue in here while I'm waiting?" I cleverly suggest.

He smiles. "No, my friend. You know the old saying—'the devil finds work for idol hands to do.' Farewell."

And he runs out, locking the door after him.

I hear whispering in the hall, then silence.

"Come on, Squat!" I yell through the door. "Break the lock and let me out."

No answer.

"Squat—let me out of here!"

All at once I hear a deep booming laugh.

"No out for you," chuckles Squat. "I guard you hard. Man tellee me who you be. You guy who steals my eyes. Pretty soon he come back. Make you put in my eyes. Then I kill you thief stealer into little pieces. Sit down again forever. You eyeball sneaker!"

"But we're pals, Squat!" I coax. "Don't I let you wrestle, and everything?"

"You give me eyes, I wrestle you pretty soon. I wrestle you pretty dead."

I shudder. Shudder and stare at the rubies.

The big jewels glow up at me, flashing and full of fire. They gaze at me like eyes. Squat's eyes.

They wink. Wink at me. Like the old double-cross. Because that's what I'm getting. The old double-cross.

I THINK of what's waiting for me out there—that bronze idol, huge and terrible, with its big arms and long fangs. It might talk funny, but there's nothing funny about its actions. It's a demon. And it's out to get me. Damn its eyes, anyhow!

Its eyes—I stare at the rubies again.

But there isn't much time for any

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staring. Fu Groan moves fast.

Before I know it he is back. Still alone except for his little friend, the revolver. And, of course, Squat.

Squat comes in with him. Fu Groan shuts the door.

"Now can I go?" I gulp.

He smiles. It's the double-cross all right.

"Just one thing more, Mr. Feep," he tells me. "Naturally, the deal I make with Jerkfinkle presupposes that the idol has its original ruby eyes. So if you don't mind putting them back, then—?"

Why should I mind? All it means is I get killed. I tell Fu Groan so.

"I will kill you now if you don't do it," Fu Groan reminds me. And pokes me in the back with the revolver.

So I take off Squat's clothes and take out the glass imitation jewels. I pull off the mustache and Squat is once more a bronze idol—a living bronze idol, with empty eye-sockets.

His mouth is open and I see the tusks gleaming there. His hands are clenching and unclenching in anticipation.

My mouth is open, too, but I am gasping through it. My hands just tremble in anticipation.

"Get the rubies," says Fu Groan.

"Give me eyes," booms the idol. "I massacre you in a hurry, plenty fast."

"Ulp!" I suggest.

"Get the rubies," Fu Groan snaps.

So I go over and pick up the rubies. Then I march back very slowly and put the left one in. I fix it into place quite carefully.

"The other one, please," says Fu Groan.

"But—"

"Now!" he growls.

I place the right eye in its socket, also very carefully.

Then I step back.

FOR a minute the idol just stands there. All at once, with the rubies in place, it does not look funny any more. It looks majestic—like a bronze god. It is a bronze god. A living bronze god with ruby eyes.

A rumble sounds in its chest.

The head swings around.

Then the feet move. The arms reach out. It gives a brazen shriek and reaches for its prey.

Fu Groan.

He has time for only one squeal. Then the metal claws close around his fat neck. There is a snap. He falls down to the floor.

I blink.

The idol of the god Squat is just standing there. It slumps forward, sits down. The hands fold. The mouth opens. And all at once it is only a statue again. A bronze, squatting statue. And the blazing rubies are smoky once more. Smoky and dead. Squat isn't alive at all.

Neither is Fu Groan.

But I am.

That is why I run like hell out of the place. On the way to the door I bump into Otis Jerkfinkle.

"Looking for a statue?" I gasp.

He nods.

"Right back there." I point to him and then keep on running. And I don't stop until I get home.

Since that night I have nothing to do with Chinese stuff—food or anything else. Because the idol nearly makes a chop suey of me, myself.

LEFTY FEEP finished his saga and sat back.

"Quite an adventure," I commented.

He nodded.

"You know, the surprise to me is that you can take any nourishment at all," I told him.

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"Why is that a surprise?" Feep asked.

"Well, didn't you say that when Fu Groan got back and made you put the rubies in, the idol was going to kill you?"

"I say it looks that way. But it works out so it doesn't look that way."

"How about explaining?" I asked.

Feep shrugged. "Why do you wish to know?"

"Oh, call it idol curiosity," I said.

He grinned.

"All right. Like I say, I get the idea I am being double-crossed. Which turns out to be true. So I pull a little cross on Fu Groan."

"How, Lefty?" I inquired.

"Well there I am locked up in the room with the rubies. I am waiting for Fu Groan to get back and make me put them into Squat's eye-sockets so he can see me and kill me.

"So there is only one thing left for me to do. I take a chisel I find lying there and change the facets on the jewels a little.

"Then when I put the eyes in the idol it grabs Fu Groan instead of me."

"But why?" I persisted. "What did you do to the jewels? Why should chipping away the facets make such a difference? Did you make the idol blind?"

"No," said Lefty Feep. "When he gets his ruby eyes in he can see things all right. But he grabs Fu Groan instead of me just the same. I chisel the rubies that way, catch on? It's all the old cross, see?"

I gasped. "You mean you—?"

"Exactly," said Lefty Feep. "He isn't blind when he grabs Fu Groan instead of me. But boy—*is he cross-eyed!*"

THE END

★ WHAT ARE HORMONES? ★

SINCE 1920, we have heard much about hormones and endocrinology. It is almost necessary for any person to know something of them. The functions of hormones are quite extensive and they probe their way into the daily affairs of everybody. Lack of certain hormones may cause death, while the presence of too much is likewise harmful.

Hormones are substances secreted by glands into the blood. This statement is in itself sensational. Glands secrete into the gut, into mouth, onto the skin and all that, but whoever or whatever heard that glands secrete into blood? It took a long time to be sure, and the methods of surgery some time ago were not of the quality to permit such investigation. The result was inevitable. People who made such claims were scoffed at or called names, and not without good cause. The method of science is experimental, and although hypothesis is fine, seeing is believing.

Since glands are living tissue, they are nourished by the blood. And the blood that giveth taketh away. But not the same substances. The blood gives up sugar and various other forms of energy, and takes the waste of the gland as well as these amazing hormones, "chemical messengers." Many hormones are known, others are suspected. When the story is completely told we will have learned much about ourselves.

Perhaps the most famous of all hormones is insulin. This hormone was discovered in a pure form by Banting and Best, two Canadian doctors. If the body is not receiving sufficient insulin, the sugar content of the blood goes up, much of the sugar goes out through the kidneys into the urine and the body actually starves for lack of it. Insulin is produced in a special place in the pancreas and it is interesting enough that the pancreas itself is stimulated by another hormone, a product of the intestine, secretin.

Secretin is formed and excreted into the blood. The blood is not particular where it takes the secretion or any other hormone. In fact the blood takes all hormones everywhere, but they affect only a certain mass of tissue. Hydrochloric acid entry into the intestine with the food from the stomach is the stimulus for the secretion of secretin. Secretin does not only stimulate the pancreas to secrete the insulin into the blood, but also enzymes into the gut. That is an entirely different subject however.

The endocrine glands, or glands which secrete into the blood are not always concerned with digestion and sugar metabolism. These glands control growth, both physical and sexual. The pineal body, a gland the size of a small marble, is an outgrowth of the brain and if it dies early, there is rapid sexual maturity. It seems to inhibit sexual growth then. The thymus,

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located in the chest, is concerned with the development of the skeleton and the bones in general. If it is not permitted to secrete, by removal or by ligation of its connections with the blood vessels, there is interference with the calcium content of the bones. The parathyroids, located on the surface of the thyroids, are also concerned with the calcium deposits in the body. If these small bodies are extirpated, the concentration of calcium in the blood is greatly diminished and a severe condition, commonly known as tetany, grips the animal. This is why scientists prefer to work on animals rather than human beings. If this was done to a man, he would have awful spasms and a terrific shaking of the entire body. There would be a psychological effect on all concerned. The pituitary gland is concerned with growth. It is located in the head just above the palate a bit toward the rear of the mouth. The anterior lobe of this is concerned with growth. Too much of its hormone results in giant conditions in the organ affected, usually the whole body. If it oversecretes in the adult, acromegaly results. This results in bone growth after the individual is already formed and amazing changes take place. The joints elongate, and forehead juts out like a shelf, thus giving the individual a monstrous aspect. He is not strengthened by this anyhow. It only serves to weaken him to a great extent anywhere the change takes place. Thus a man who used his hands skillfully would find them completely useless, being completely unable to bend the fingers sometimes. On the other hand, little secretion of the pituitary anterior lobe will cause dwarfism and lack of sexual potency.

These glands are also important in sexual maturation. The pituitary can cause powerful uterine contractions being a stimulant to that type of muscle, and it can also cause rise of blood pressure. These are both important in the delivery of the child. There are other effects of the pituitary, closely associated with the sexual cycle of the woman. Several hormones have been found which are interactive, two from the ovary, and two from the pituitary body. The subject has been receiving careful attention and much work has been done quite recently.

THE thyroid gland is one of the most famous of all endocrine glands and the reason is in the fact that the people of the Middle West had so much difficulty because of it. Too much thyroid speeds up the body, while too little will cause the person to be sluggish, unwilling and unenergetic. Too little thyroid secretion in early life may cause imbecility and stunting of the body. One of the more interesting effects of the thyroid is the case of goiter which was quite prevalent not so very long ago. In this case, we find the thyroid does not have enough iodine. To compensate for lack of iodine, the thyroid grows to a very large size and, of course, still fails to secrete enough thyroxin, its secretion. Goiter is not restricted to man alone, all animals may have it. This is the case where sea water is not present. Sea water and hence, fish, contain some iodine. This iodine quality is quite small, but the amount required for the manufacture of thyroxin is even smaller. The result is that people who live near the sea very rarely have goiter. But what of the people who live inland, as in the Middle West? Over thirty percent of the men and seventy percent of the women were said to have had goiter at least once in their lifetimes, if not all through it. The treatment is quite simple. We now put a very small quantity of iodine, salts of iodine, in our salt. The quantity is small, so small that it cannot be noted except by chemical means. The result is that now very few people in any part of the country have goiter.

Although there are many more hormones in the body, only one more famous one merits our attention here. This is adrenalin. Adrenalin has been made out of the body, but its effects within are the real story. Adrenalin is formed in the adrenal glands found just on the surface of the kidney, and on top of it. Adrenalin is continuously secreted, but in varying amounts. This gland really gives man the ability to fight or fly. It increases the heartbeat, increases the muscle tone, and also increases the blood pressure. These effects are very important. Stories are told of men who in difficult straits were able to muster strength they had never dreamed they had. A man in Oregon was coming home late one night and saw his house burning, his wife and child were inside. He whipped his horse as much as he could to go faster, but finally dismounted from the buckboard and outstripped the horse to his house. He rushed inside, lifted his wife and child bodily and carried them outside. His wife was no small woman and he was no giant, but without waiting another second, he went into the house again, and carried the bed out. He was not satisfied and went in a third time, lifted up a huge metal stove and staggered out with that. The house then collapsed and he remained outside. The family was taken in by some neighbors and when the house was rebuilt, he felt it his duty to carry the stove back in. His greatest effort was insufficient. He and five more men took it in. This is no fiction. It actually happened, and the amazing part of it all is that it could happen to any normal person, under extraordinary circumstances.

A summary of the scope of the functions of hormones would show that they are chemical messengers, the chemicals having been isolated, secreted into the blood stream by glands without ducts. They enter into practically every type of action and are for the most part vital. Serious disorders may be caused by their being present in too great or too little quantities, disorders which may affect the person physically or in the matter of personality. Much work on the subject has been done and much more is to be done.

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By LEROY YERXA

ONLY the rear wall of the building remained upright. The rest, shattered by bombs, had been leveled into a rough court. Leaving the high wall upright was Captain Hendrik Fodstrad's idea. It made a splendid place for him to carry out mass executions.

This afternoon there were a dozen Norwegian hostages standing at forced attention, their backs against the icy, rough stones of the wall. They were hardy men, eyes staring straight ahead, ready for what was to happen.

In the center of the court, Hendrik Fodstrad stood stiffly beside the three machine guns. The gunners were seated calmly. One of them puffed a cigarette. This was old business. Nasty business that was better when finished quickly.

In spite of the smart uniform, the upright military appearance of Captain Hendrik Fodstrad, he was not comfortable. His eyes, bleary from lack of sleep, studied the youngest man in the group along the wall. Fodstrad was not yet satisfied.

He walked quickly toward the line of condemned men. There was hate and defiance in their eyes. Fear that he tried to ignore welled up inside him. He paused before the blond-headed youth near the end of the wall.

"Evind Bergrof?"

"You know me well." Bergrof's expression was stony.

Anger turned Fodstrad's face white. His lips pressed into a hard line.

"You are a fool, Evind Bergrof. You cannot fight the new order. You must accept it."

"And become a Quisling boot-licker?" Bergrof sneered. "No thank you, *neighbor* Fodstrad. I would rather die."

Fodstrad became eager. He leaned close to the condemned man.

"If you will name the members of the band," he whispered, "I could arrange for your life."

Bergrof drew back.

"I tell you for the hundredth time, Quisling *skunk*, that I murdered that German myself. He killed my father. Do you think I need an army to kill a single German? You attack in packs and expect us to do the same."

A murmur of anger came from the line of men. Fodstrad's heels snapped together sharply. With reddened face he wheeled and marched quickly to the machine guns. Turning, he raised a gloved hand smartly into the air. The men against the wall stiffened. The hand dropped.

"Fire!"

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Fodstrad had executed Evind Bergrof.
Then how could his voice comé over the phone?

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The sudden staccato bursts of the guns. The court was blue with smoke. Men dropped slowly along the wall. Slid down as though reluctant to part with life, turned and dropped forward in grotesque positions of death. No cry of fear had escaped them. They died because Evind Bergrof had avenged his father. It did not matter. If not for this, they would have died to appease Nazi wrath for some other trivial crime.

HENDRIK FODSTRAD left the court hurriedly. Evind Bergrof had been his neighbor before the Nazis came. Fodstrad had engineered many executions, but none with the nervous, frightened feeling that filled him this morning. Did Quisling, or the great Fuehrer himself, ever suffer from a guilty conscience? Fodstrad smiled. Hardly! It was the falling bodies, the stark look of death. He would forget it soon as he had the others. Was he not of chosen stock?

Hendrik Fodstrad was second in command of the organization in Trondheim. Johan Lipstead had, by his earlier contacts with Berlin, been placed directly over Fodstrad in Quisling's group.

Fodstrad reached his apartment, called Johan Lipstead and informed him that the mission had been carried out. Then he forsook the German uniform, bathed and settled down for a quiet evening. It was an interesting book. An intoxicating dream of after-war promises to the Fuehrer's followers. Yet, try as he might, Hendrik Fodstrad could not concentrate. He kept remembering Evind Bergrof.

It was at nine that the first phone call came. Afterward, he tried to explain the stark, unreasonable fear that swept over him as the bell tingled in the hall. Fodstrad arose quickly and went to the cabinet. He held the receiver to his ear. Before he could offer a greeting, a low voice spoke in his ear.

"Nazi, are you resting well? This is Evind Bergrof."

Fodstrad's hand started to shake.

"Who—what? I'm afraid I don't understand?"

The phone clicked softly and the room was still.

"Hello—hello?" Fodstrad rattled the phone. "Hello—operator!!"

"Your number, please!"

"I was cut off," he shouted. "Trace that call. This is Captain Hendrik Fodstrad."

A moment of silence, then:

"I'm sorry, Captain Fodstrad, the call came from a public booth. We are unable . . ."

He slammed the phone into its cradle and marched across the room to the window. His fists were clenched tightly behind his back. Blood had drained from them and the knuckles were white. He stared down into the silent street for a long time, trying to regain control of his emotions.

"Evind Bergrof," he repeated the name aloud, then pivoted and resumed his march from one side of the room to the other. "But no, it is impossible."

FODSTRAD returned to his book, and tried to forget the incident. It was exactly ten o'clock when the phone rang again. This time he approached it slowly, hesitantly.

Probably Captain Lipstead was calling with instructions for tomorrow. More executions, no doubt. Trondheim was becoming troublesome. His men hardly dared to give the Nazi salute in public since so many Norwegians had been killed.

He lifted the receiver slowly. The voice came before he could question or

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interrupt it.

"Nazi, are you resting well? This is Evind Bergrof."

This time Hendrik Fodstrad did not lose time by answering. He jiggled the phone quickly and shouted at the operator. Five minutes of threats and oaths followed, only resulting in complete failure to locate the booth from which the call had been placed.

Hendrik Fodstrad was completely unnerved. He dared not call Lipstead. Quisling's men were of iron. He, Hendrik Fodstrad, would be laughed at if he reported so trivial an incident. Beyond doubt friends or relatives of the dead Bergrof were trying to frighten him by foolish calls.

Having lost all interest in his book, Hendrik Fodstrad retired for the night. But first he made sure that the windows and doors were bolted tightly. His hands were shaking as he turned out the light by the bed.

"Nazi, are you resting well?"

That voice. That hushed, expressionless voice, came to him over and over in the darkness. He could not sleep. He could only lie there staring at the ceiling, perspiration oozing cold and wet on his forehead and in the palms of his hands.

The phone rang again at eleven, and at twelve and every hour for the remainder of the night. Each time, Hendrik Fodstrad started up from his bed at the sound, then sank back, breathing hard.

Once, close to morning, he took the receiver from its cradle and placed it on the table. Immediately the voice was in the room, low and hollow over the wire.

"Nazi, are you resting . . ."

He clutched the phone hurriedly and returned it to its place. The sun was already rising across the pine-clad hills east of the city. He dressed as carefully as possible and sat near the window where he could look down at an awakening city. People straggled into the streets and Trondheim awakened. Hendrik Fodstrad felt better. Without the shadows of night around him, the phone lost some of its horror. It was a new day, with new hostages to be dealt with. Gradually he forgot Evind Bergrof and the phone that reminded him of death.

THAT night and for the week of long nights that followed, Hendrik Fodstrad found no rest. The phone rang its first reminder at nine. From then on, he relived with fresh terror the hour of Evind Bergrof's death.

Not that Fodstrad didn't take precautionary measures against these disturbances. At first he placed men near various public phone booths. These military police apprehended every person who was caught using a phone on the hour. The calls continued. Occasionally, hoping that the culprit had been located, Fodstrad would answer his phone. He would wait just long enough to hear the voice and slam the phone down bitterly.

The strain was driving him crazy. The end of the first week brought a new ruling from Quisling's office. No public phone booths were to be used after nine in the evening.

It made no difference. In the apartment of Hendrik Fodstrad the phone continued its hourly ringing. He tried sleeping in the homes of friends, but the ringing phone followed him accurately and plagued him until he became terribly frightened as soon as the sun went down.

Hendrik Fodstrad had every soldier he could command rounding up hostages to pay the price of his lost sleep. He, like Quisling, worked on the theory that enough Norwegians, whether

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guilty or not, would make up for not finding the right man.

Monday would bring the death of thirty hostages, all picked up within a short distance of public booths. A proclamation had been made of their coming death. If the *voice* read that proclamation, Fodstrad was quite sure he would give himself up to save his countrymen from the firing squad.

So sure was he that he stayed close to his phone on Sunday. It didn't frighten him during the day. It was at night! Fodstrad shuddered. What would he do if the man did not give up? If he was forced to kill this group in retaliation, and another and another? If the phone went on ringing through eternity?

"Br-r-r-i-n-g"

It was still light outside, not quite four o'clock. Fodstrad went to the phone eagerly. He picked it up, a triumphant grin on his face.

"Captain Hendrik Fodstrad," he snapped.

"Nazi," *it was the voice, calm and sarcastic,* "I understand you have searched for me?"

FODSTRAD was rewarded at last. He had been clever enough to smoke the rat from his hole.

"I *would* like to meet one who is so persistently attentive," he admitted cautiously. "I suppose the news of your countrymen dying for your crime has brought you into the open?"

A quick, harsh laugh came over the wire.

"You have not been able to locate me, Hendrik," the voice went on smoothly. "It is because you do not look in the right place. May I challenge you to an interview?"

Fodstrad grinned cunningly.

"Alone?" he asked.

A hard chuckle.

"As you wish it."

Fodstrad listened closely, drawing a pencil from his pocket.

"You may come to 99 Manheim Road. I will wait there for you," the voice continued.

After the receiver clicked sharply, Fodstrad wrote the number on a slip of paper.

At last he had something to work on. A strange excitement filled him.

First, he thought swiftly, he must call Johan Lipstead. Their appointment would be postponed until tomorrow.

He tried to contact Lipstead's office but there was no answer. Swearing, he changed the number and contacted headquarters. He ordered ten soldiers to report to his apartment at once. Satisfied, he penned a short note to Johan Lipstead and left it lying on the table.

Making sure his pistol was loaded, he put on his great-coat and went out into the icy street. Ten soldiers of the German army were waiting at attention in the lobby. He returned their salute curtly and strode confidently toward the door.

99 Manheim Road

The fool had been unwise to offer such a challenge. There would be no more threatening phone calls.

JOHAN LIPSTEAD, skinny and clownish in his Nazi uniform, moved slowly about Hendrik Fodstrad's apartment. Indecision filled his watery blue eyes. He clutched the note in his long fingers, trying to place the reason for sudden fear that welled up inside of him. He read the note for the third time.

Captain Lipstead:

I regret I am unable to await your company. I attempted to con-

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tact you before urgent business called me away. We have at last brought the rat from his hole. The mysterious caller has challenged me to meet him at 99 Manheim Road. It was a brave but foolish move on his part. We will return with his body before night. Heil Hitler!

Captain Hendrik Fodstrad.

Lipstead stopped his restless pacing suddenly and his heavily veined face turned white.

"But, no! That cannot be."

He left the apartment hurriedly. Outside his car was waiting.

"99 Manheim Road. We must hurry!"

Lipstead had suddenly remembered that address. Remembered something about it that filled him with horrible fear.

The car whirled around a corner and down the bombed, deserted Manheim Road. It stopped where there had once been a tenement building, and the driver turned in his seat.

"This *was* 99 Manheim Road," he said, "before we bombed . . ."

He stopped short, eyes bulging at something he saw across the court of the destroyed building.

Lipstead opened the door quickly. With gun in hand he ran across the court, past the spot where Fodstrad's machine guns were always placed. Here was the wall where Evind Bergrof had died.

There were eleven men stretched in odd postures at the foot of the wall.

Ten of them were dressed in the uniform of the German army. The eleventh . . .

Johan Lipstead turned Fodstrad over until his big, sightless eyes stared up at the sky. His body was already cold.

Yet there were no wounds. Not a single bullet had touched the bodies of any of the men.

"Nazi," Johan Lipstead thought he heard a low voice whispering in the wind, "are you resting well?"

☆ WAR BETWEEN GERMS ☆

AFTER five years of research, Dr. Rene J. Dubos of the Rockefeller Institute succeeded in developing a strain of bacteria that was harmless to the human body but would kill the germs inside the body.

First Dr. Dubos obtained many samples of earth from the greenhouse maintained by the institute. Each sample, like any other earth, contained millions of harmless soil bacteria which were allowed to live unmolested on the foods they found in their sample of earth. Great care was taken to insure that no food was replenished in any sample and it was not long until the available food supply was exhausted and the bacteria on the verge of starvation.

At this point, streptococci, diphtheria germs, and pus-forming microbes were placed in the earth and the starving bacteria could take their choice: die of starvation or fight the germs, destroy them, and eat them. Most of the bacteria died, either because they couldn't kill the germs or because they couldn't live on this strange diet, but some of the bacteria got used to the new diet and started a new race of bacteria that actually thrived on germs.

From these new bacteria, Dr. Dubos removed the substance in their bodies that destroyed the germs and called it tyrothrycin. Upon analysis this substance was found to be a union of gramicidin and tyrocidin. Extensive tests were made using tyrothrycin on humans and Dr. C. H. Rammelkamp, Jr., and Dr. C. S. Keefer of the Boston University School of Medicine said it was from 1,000 to 100,000 times more effective than sulfanilamide for curing ulcers, chest infections, and bullet wounds. Others have also conducted tests with similar success and the Allies are making tests to determine its effectiveness in healing war wounds.

Tyrothrycin has one serious hitch connected with its use in that it kills the red corpuscles if it enters the blood vessels. Thus it cannot be administered orally or injected but must be applied locally. Undismayed, Dr. Dubos has continued his research to perfect the new substance so that this defect will be abolished.

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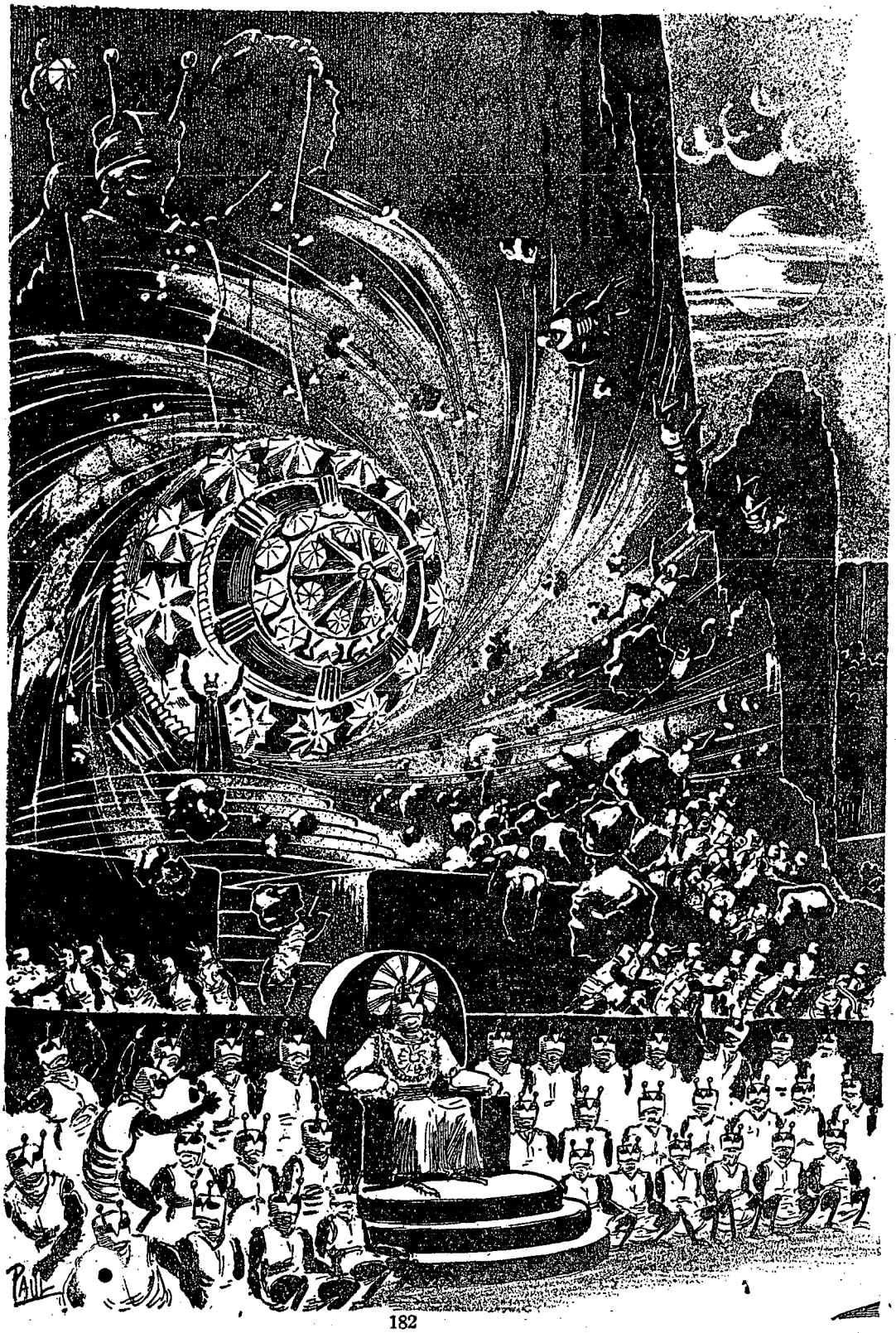

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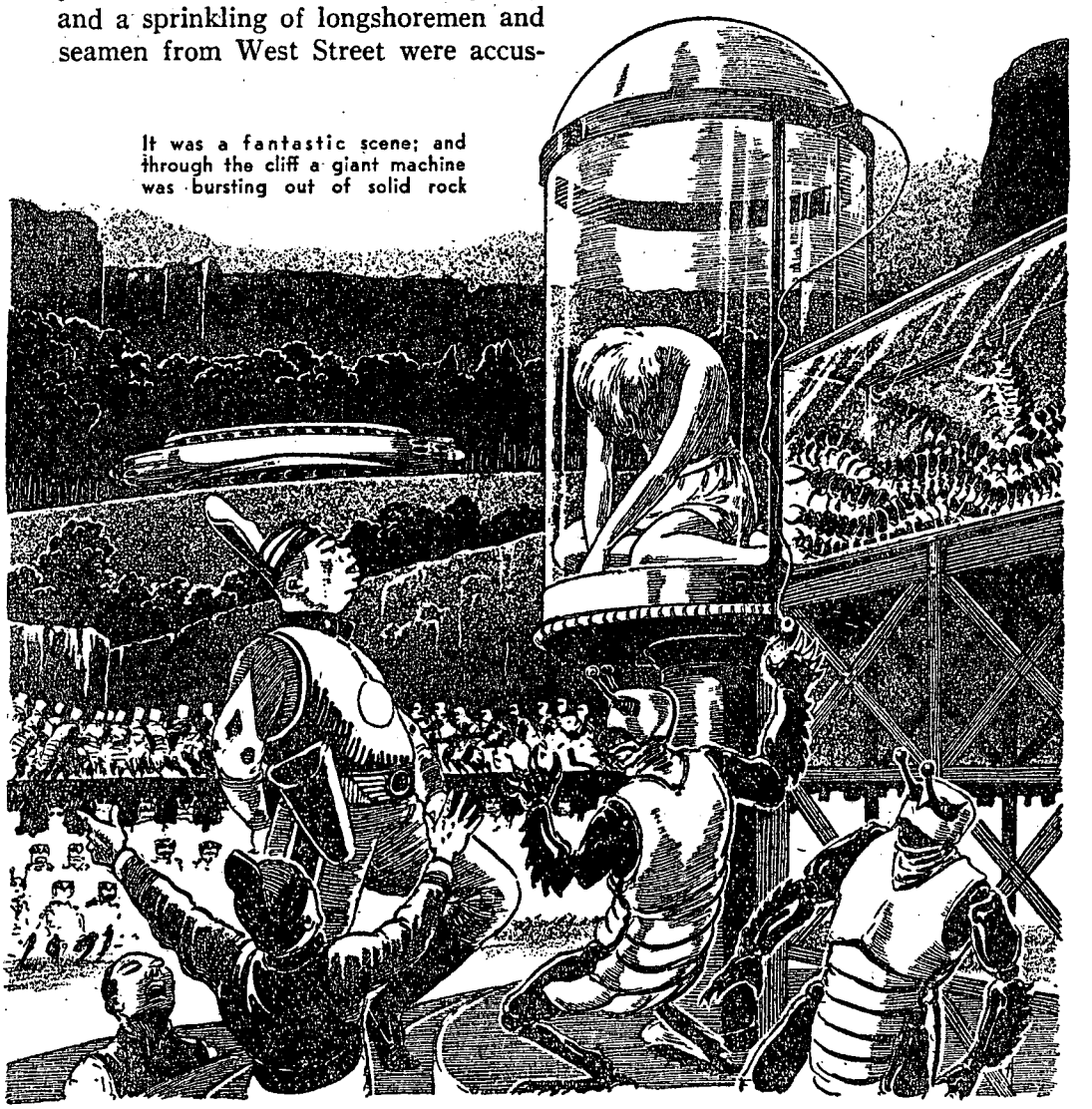
OTHER WORLDS

By WALTON BLODGETT

Two men stepped through the doorway to a world that lies unsuspected beside our own

THE first time I saw the kid was in a little bistro on Hudson Street, near Morton, a sort of Joe's Bar & Grill where the local gentry and a sprinkling of longshoremen and seamen from West Street were accustomed to drop in evenings and discuss politics and affairs over a refreshing glass. There was a particularly stimu-



It was a fantastic scene; and through the cliff a giant machine was bursting out of solid rock

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lating soiree this hot August evening in 1940.

As I entered a group of Democrats had flushed a Republican from a corner stool and were endeavoring to point out flaws in his argument. The Republican offered to adjourn to the sidewalk and thrash things out in the best Hudson Street tradition and on the way he picked up a few supporters whose staunch convictions sprang more from beer and a desire for a little physical exercise than from loyalty to the GOP.

There were other discussions going on at the same time. Strident harangues of the "Then I says to him, I says . . ." variety and snatches of song added to the uproar. Offers of a good, stiff smack in the kisser were being freely bandied about and the bartenders kept a couple of heavy bung-starters handy at all times.

He was sitting at the bar, right in front of the beer taps, not taking part in any of the talk. What struck me about him was the fact that he was obviously different from the rest of them. A nice looking kid, well dressed in a careless way, with a good, intelligent face and capable hands. There was something about him that was Small Town, although he wasn't a hick. Just a nice kid that had come from a good family and was lonesome in the city.

He was drinking a lot and I thought it was too bad. He just wasn't the type to be tying one on in this Hudson Street place. He had a desperate look about him and he was trying to listen to everything at once, like a man who had been rescued from a desert island and who wanted to reassure himself that the world was a companionable place, full of nice, solid human beings.

I lost track of him during a renewed flurry of fists right behind me as several seamen attempted to settle the international situation and a cop came in and said he was going to have peace and quiet on his beat if he had to run everybody in to get it. There was never a dull moment on Hudson Street.

I was finishing my beer when a voice said,

"Thississo unreal!"

He was standing right behind me, swaying a little, clutching a half-finished shot of rye in one hand and a small beer in the other.

"Unreal?" I said, puzzled.

He regarded me with enormous gravity, carefully setting his two glasses on the bar and lowering himself onto the next stool. He tilted dangerously over toward me and spoke confidentially in my ear.

"I could tell you things that would make you fall right off that stool, if I wanned to." He paused, impressively. "And what's more, I do want to. Right off that stool. You. With surprise." He stopped and seemed to consider sorting out this last series of statements, gave it up and went on. "Frinsanse, you think you know where you are, right here on Hudson Street. Right! What would you say if I told you that you are also, right this very minute, somewhere else? You don't know it but you are also sitting right under the Three-Eyed Idol inna Hall of Awful Shadow!" He tapped me solemnly on the shoulder. "They're all around you. You can't see them but I can. Hall of Awful Shadda — Shad— Shad-dows!" He regarded me triumphantly.

IT DIDN'T seem as funny as it would have been if he'd been one of the regular toss-pots. He was such a nice, serious-looking kid to be wasting his time drinking in a place like this.

"Have drink!" he said and tried to catch the bartender's eye.

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"You have a drink already," I pointed out. "You'd better go home and get some sleep before those Awful Shadows get you and you're taken away in the Paddy Wagon."

He looked at me in a hurt sort of way.

"You don't believe me! I'm crazy! Why don't you say it? I might have known nobody would believe me!" He got up, a picture of outraged self-respect and picked up his drinks.

"All right. You can go to hell. I can get along without any help from you." He wavered off into the crowd. I thought of stopping him and getting him home. He was such a nice looking guy. Then I shrugged it off. Just another drunk. In New York you don't stick your nose in. I went home and tried to forget him.

I was sitting in that little park where Eighth Avenue runs into Hudson Street the next evening, still thinking about this guy and his funny talk. I felt mean about leaving him there with all those drunks. I tried to tell myself that it was none of my business but it bothered me. He was probably lonesome and he might have started that rigmarole with somebody else and had his teeth kicked in. Then I saw him again.

He was walking aimlessly around, looking for a vacant seat. There was one next to me and on an impulse I yelled, "Hey!"

He came over and sat down.

"Haven't I seen . . . ?"

"Sure you have. Remember last night? You were telling me something about some Awful Shadows. I'm glad to see you made out all right. The boys in there were throwing their weight around for keeps."

He laughed.

"Sure, I remember. You must have thought I was crazy. Hope I didn't bother you too much."

"It takes a lot to do that. Sometimes you have to slug your way out of one of those places." He talked for awhile about unimportant things, the heat, baseball, the chances of getting a swim in one of the nearby pools. I could tell there was something on his mind. He seemed to be trying to nerve himself to tell me something. I was a little curious, because of his wild talk of the night before, but I also had a feeling that it would probably turn into another hard-luck story and I didn't try to encourage him.

Finally he said, "How about having a cup of coffee with me? I'd like to tell you something."

WE WALKED up Eighth to a drug store and got a booth there. When we had our coffee he fidgeted nervously for a minute and then blurted, "I noticed you last night and wanted to talk to you because you were the only one in there who looked as though he knew what the score was. Of course by that time I was too crocked to make any sense. The thing is I don't know anybody in New York and I'm broke and in a jam."

"Oh—oh," I thought, "Here it comes, the old touch."

"Don't get me wrong," he hurried on, "I'm not asking you for money and I'm not in trouble with the law. I need some assistance badly on some work I'm doing and I can't afford to pay for it. It's a tough spot for me, not knowing anybody here that can help me. I just have to take a chance on some stranger that I think I can trust and who is willing to take a chance on this thing. I'll tell you the story first and you see what you think of it. I am sure that there will be a lot of money in it and I'll split with you, fifty-fifty. This work you'll do is strictly on the

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level, nothing illegal. All I want is help in your spare time. It may be dangerous," he studied me for a moment, "and it must be confidential. You don't know my name or where I live and I'm not going to tell you until you've heard the story. I'll tell you then if you'll come in with me. You see, it's not entirely my secret and I have to protect myself."

In spite of myself I was getting interested.

"Let's hear the story."

"All right. Just remember that I can prove everything I say because this story will be pretty hard to believe." He gulped the last of his coffee. "You've heard of Zodiac Radio?"

"I own one of their sets."

"Well, that's where this business started. I was working for them, up until quite recently. When this new Frequency Modulation came out we put out a receiver for it and at the same time they started to try out other methods of static elimination. They wanted to get something new and exclusive. Zodiac is a small outfit but they were lucky in hiring a genius, Doc Potter, and they gave him his own shop and the green light to do whatever he wanted. I was working in the repair shop then and they gave me a raise and made me Doc's assistant. He wasn't a real doctor. We just called him that because he was always giving people his home-made remedies for whatever ailed them. These remedies were always Rye and a varying amount of tap-water, depending on the ailment, and he would give them high-sounding names. He was a great guy and lots of fun to work with.

"We worked on static elimination for months, finally coming up with something very good which they are going to incorporate in their next models, if the Army doesn't take it over, so Doc and I split a nice bonus. However, that's not the point of this story. While we were working on static we stumbled on something else that seemed even bigger. We had been trying the ultra-short waves and using entirely new principles which I can't tell you about, of course, as that is Doc's secret. I will say that we were trying broadcasting with beams of light, both visible light and invisible ultra-violet. That's not all of it but it will give you an idea.

"Anyway, the result was that one day we found that we were sort of rearranging things. Doc was sending from the shop and I was receiving in a shack outside of town. We had two sets sending, jamming each other, and were trying to see if our receiver was unscrambling them. It was the two sets, sending together, that did it. Doc noticed that some tools on the table turned grey and crumbled to powder. The table surface came up in a rash and everything between the two sending sets reacted in a funny way. We found out later that we had changed the atomic structure of these things. That has been done before, of course, but by an entirely different method.

"DOC was pretty excited about it. 'We are the Mad Scientists of Zodiac,' he would whisper hoarsely, 'And we have invented a Death Ray!' He would strike poses like Boris Karloff, rolling his eyes and gibbering. We dropped the anti-static work and began experimenting with this new thing. We had a lot of fun at that stage, putting on our Mad Scientist and Death Ray act and we had our secretary, Miss Bellknap, scared to death. One day Doc would back her into a corner and tell her that he was going to project her twenty thousand years into the future and the next he would chase

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her around the lab yelling that his secret process would age a person forty years in forty seconds. He liked to put on a big, false beard and creep up behind her and suddenly whisper, 'Hist! Have you ze papers?'

"After about two months' work we were able to focus the rays on an area about six feet square and we tried all sorts of things. Doc was always hoping that he could change coal into diamonds, or something. We also tried it on mice and ginea pigs and we got some amazing results there. Through Doc's secret process we stepped up the rate of atomic motion to such a point that our mice disappeared right out of this world. Then we were able to bring them back to sight again. For a long time we got nothing but a lot of dead mice in various stages of atomic disintegration but finally we found a vibration rate that brought them back to sight alive.

"About this time the front office began clamoring for some results so we put on a demonstration. It was only partially successful. We made some mice disappear but we lost our jobs. The way they put it in the front office, the old-fashioned mouse-trap did just as thorough a job in eliminating mice without all the expense of building a set and using up so much electric power. They seemed to think we were wasting our time so Doc resigned for both of us.

"Doc was offered the free use of a loft here in New York so we pooled our money and came on. We started with larger animals now. We got a big Airdale from the Bide-a-Wee Home and gave him the whole business. It seemed to scare him a bit but otherwise he was all right. You see, we were trying to make it safe for a human being to go through the process. We thought, then, that the animals were put in a state of suspended animation. It might be of some use in treating cancer and t.b., something better than the freezing process that they are working on now.

"ONE day a short time ago we put Gladstone, the Airdale into the Great Where-is-it and left him there for an hour and he didn't come back. Up to this time we had only left him invisible for a few seconds. Well, damned if Doc didn't decide to 'go after him.' He was crazy to try the thing himself and, besides, he had become very fond of Gladstone, claiming he was a dead ringer for Miss Belknap. I never could see the resemblance myself as I thought Gladstone was a very smart dog. I didn't think he was worth risking your life for, however, and I told Doc so but he wouldn't listen to me. I wish to God he had.

" 'Gladstone is his own worst enemy,' Doc kept saying, 'He is probably out there in the void, assembling all the wrong atoms into something a good deal worse than a dead fish which he is planning to bring back and lay at our feet. I'll have to catch him before he gets into trouble.' Of course we never expected anything *went* anywhere at all. Doc was just talking in his crazy way. I kept telling him it looked pretty ominous, Gladstone disappearing and all, but he had his mind set on it and nothing would stop him. He wrote a note saying I wasn't responsible in case he didn't come back and sat down on the leaded platform where the rays focused.

" 'Slip the business to me, Petey!' he shouted, 'Gladstone, here I come!'

"I turned on the power and waited in a cold sweat for Doc to disappear. The last thing that seemed to go was his grin, like the Chesire Cat in Alice in Wonderland, which hung before my eyes in a sort of after-vision.

"We had agreed that I would wait

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exactly three minutes and then I would pull the switch again and Doc would, we hoped, come back. It was the longest three minutes I ever spent. I kept wondering if I had killed him and, if I had, what I could do about it. I was shaking all over when the three minutes were up.

"I pulled the switch, not daring to look at the platform. There was a scrambling noise and Gladstone whizzed by me and shot under my bed with his tail between his legs. I turned around then and saw Doc climb off the platform and sit in a chair, breathing heavily. I was pretty relieved to see him.

"Doc took a deep breath and said, 'Wow!'

"Then I noticed that he was white as a sheet and his hands were trembling as he tried to light a cigarette.

"'Peter,' he babbled, 'There's another world there, here, all around us! We can't see it! Not until we change the rate of v-vibrations of our atoms b-b-by our . . . oh, my golly!' he gave up trying to light a cigarette and threw it away. 'It's an awful place! An awful place! It's like nothing you ever saw! Another world with light, atmosphere, living creatures . . . monsters! Nightmare monsters! Monsters with human intelligence that build huge structures, cities, everything!'

"I went over and shook him. 'Doc!' I shouted, 'Doc! Wake up! You're dreaming! You're having a nightmare! That set of yours put you to sleep!'

"'It did NOT put me to sleep!' He jumped up and began to talk more rapidly and excitedly than I had ever heard him. 'Ask Gladstone! I mean, look at Gladstone! Did Gladstone get those scratches in my sleep? No! Listen, Petey! Picture a room, a hall, so vast that the ends are lost in shadow and the ceiling is out of sight! A hall whose architecture is unlike anything on this earth, old as Time and solid as—as—well, solid! We are standing in the middle of it right now! You and I and Gladstone and the people downstairs and most of the people on this block! Two worlds, Petey! Two worlds existing simultaneously, occupying the same place in time and space, separated only by a thin veil, by the accidental fact that our atomic structure is tuned to a different speed!'

"I WAS still skeptical because I knew how Doc liked to dramatize everything. 'How could you see all that in three minutes? And what's all this stuff about monsters?'

"He had been trying to light another cigarette but at the word 'monsters' he twitched convulsively and crushed the cigarette against his chin. He threw that one away, too. 'Monsters! Bats! Big as eagles! Big as barns!'

"I made a mental note that the bats, if any, were possibly a little bigger than ours, but not much. Doc Potter is like that.

"'I was sitting there,' he pointed to the platform, 'Watching you at the set and then I was sitting on a stone floor, listening to the wildest howling I ever heard. It was like watching one scene in a movie dissolve into the next one. I was dizzy and felt as though I had just been waked up from a long sleep. For a few seconds I couldn't remember what had happened to me. Then it came back and I knew I was in that state, invisible to you. I looked around and saw I was in a huge hall of stone, a tremendous place! And the howling went on, getting nearer and nearer! I didn't dare move. I was afraid I'd get out of the zone of influence of the beam. Then a huge shadow moved against the darkness where the ceiling ought to be! It was

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like a bat, flying. Then there was another and another and more, until I lost count. Their eyes glittered like cats' eyes! It was awful to see them circling up there!

" 'Suddenly Gladstone appeared. He must have been hiding under something to get away from the bats. When I first saw him he was in full flight, racing across the floor to me. He crashed into me and crowded up against my legs, trembling. I don't blame him, I was scared myself!

" 'The bats, or whatever they were, dipped down, circling the hall faster and faster, closing in on Gladstone and me. One bat banked up steeply, turned and dove straight at us! Petey, it had a human face! I swear it! I jumped up and hit at it and I could feel its teeth against my knuckles! It screamed like a woman and went off, still screaming. The others were coming, volplaning down at me! I could hear the leathery rustle of their wings above the screaming and howling, and smell them! Ugh! Then, suddenly . . . I was here with you.' He mopped his forehead with a shaky hand. 'God, I'm glad we agreed on only three minutes! Another minute there and old man Potter's little boy would be . . . would . . . y'know, I think I'm going to pass out!'

"He did.

"Next day, of course, nothing would do but he had to go back to the 'Hall of Awful Shadow,' as he called it. I didn't like the idea at all but if you knew Potter you'd know how hard it was to argue him out of anything he'd set his mind on. He had half convinced me of the existence of this other world. I had never seen him so serious and excited. You could generally tell by the look in his eye when he was pulling one of his long-winded practical jokes. And there was Gladstone, so scared we had to drag him out from under the bed to treat several long, jagged scars on his back and flanks. Doc said that when we put Gladstone through the zone he must have wandered, or been scared out of the zone of influence and the bats had attacked him.

"He took a gun, a flashlight and some chalk to mark the place on the floor of the hall where the control zone of the beam was effective and I put him through. We had agreed that I would tune him back in exactly thirty minutes.

"You've probably guessed the rest. He didn't come back this time. I wouldn't be bothering you with this story if he had."

THE kid, Petey I gathered his name was, rubbed his hands nervously over his face.

"I spent twenty-four hours by the set, turning on the beam every thirty minutes but nothing happened. You see, we can't leave it open all the time. It uses up too much juice. I rigged up an automatic switch-off with an old alarm clock and went through myself." He shuddered. "Doc was right. There *is* another world, just as he said. I've seen it too, now. I never want to see it again! But I've got to go back, to find Doc if he's still alive."

"What was it like?" I asked.

"It was awful! I can't describe it. I was there for only thirty minutes and I just got back to the zone by seconds. That automatic switch I rigged up is unreliable and if anything should happen to it while I'm in there neither Doc nor I could ever get out. That's why I need help. I need somebody to work the set while I'm in there.

"I wouldn't blame you if you said I was crazy and walked out on me. It's such a crazy story. But if you'll let me, I'll prove right now that everything I've said is true!"

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I sat for a long time, looking into my empty coffee cup.

"If you have any sense at all," I said to myself, "you'll get out of this business right now . . . and regret it the rest of your life!" Something about the whole thing, the serious, worried kid and the story of impossible adventure, appealed strongly to me. I looked up at him.

"I'm in! I don't know a thing about radio, but . . ."

"You'll help!" he exclaimed. "You don't have to know anything. It's simple to work the set. I can show you how." He didn't thank me but I could tell from the look of intense relief on his face that he was grateful.

HE TOOK me to the loft where they had set up their equipment, a large, grimy room on the fourth floor of an old building on Christopher Street. A big, battered Airedale who turned out to be Gladstone leaped and cavorted around us. There was a bare amount of furniture; two cots, several chairs and tables, an old-fashioned wardrobe. In one corner by a chipped sink stood an old oil stove and a cupboard containing canned foods and broken eating utensils. In the center of the room, on either side of a raised platform, stood two objects that looked to me like radio transmitters. They seemed quite simple to my untrained eye, built with an extreme economy of material. No cabinets hid any of the parts which were right out in the open and as far as I could tell looked like the standard parts of a radio sending set. Around the room clothes were hung on nails hammered in the wall or piled dustily on the floor. Everything was a jumble of disorder, dust and Gladstone, who seemed to be everywhere at once, knocking things over with a wildly gyrating tail. I was a little disappointed in the whole set-up. I had expected to see a large, gleaming laboratory full of strange, humming machines, colored lights blinking on and off, glowing coils and banks of switches and dials.

"You mean to tell me that this pile of junk will send a person into another world?" I asked.

The boy, Petey, removed Gladstone from between his legs.

"We were operating on a shoestring. I don't expect you to be impressed by its looks, just by its results."

He threw a switch at the bottom of the instrument panel of each set. Tubes slowly came to life and hummed softly, glowing with varying intensities of light. He waited a moment, apparently giving the sets time to warm up thoroughly, then turned a knob that caused the humming to rise to a high-pitched whine and then fade away to silence. At this point he turned another switch and looked nervously and expectantly at the platform between the sets. Nothing happened. He said, "Nothing," under his breath and cut the second switch off again. The air was full of tension, possibly caused by the power that was being focused on the platform. I could feel my skin tingling and Gladstone disappeared under the bed with a yelp of fear.

"All right, here goes experiment one," Petey said. He took a cage containing two white mice from a shelf and put it on the platform. Once more he cut in the switch and the cage, mice and all, disappeared completely. It was weird. He cut the switch and looked at me expectantly.

"See? Those mice are on the stone floor of Potter's 'Hall of Awful Shadows.'"

I walked over to the platform and felt around gingerly, not trusting my eyes. There was nothing there. I ran

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my hands over the whole thing and passed them through the air overhead.

"Now watch," said Petey. He cut the switch in again and there were the mice in their cage, squeaking and running around excitedly.

"Well, I'll be damned!" It was all I could think of to say.

WE WORKED with the thing all night, making objects disappear and appear again while Petey showed me how to operate it. It was a wonderful thing, all right. Finally, when I knew just how to turn the switches in their proper order, Petey got on the platform and I made him disappear. In spite of having seen the mice and the other things go through and come out intact it was a nerve-racking experience to see a human being vanish in thin air and to know that I was responsible for his safety. I cut him back almost immediately.

"What was it like this time? Did I do all right?" I asked.

His face was white and serious.

"It's night there, too," he said. "Couldn't see a thing. You did all right. Now if you can get me a gun and a flashlight I had better go through and make a long search for Potter."

After breakfast I went home and put on some old clothes. I had a good gun, a handy little automatic. I put it in my pocket and went out for a box of ammunition, a flashlight and a good hunting-knife.

Petey met me at the door. He looked nervous.

"Did you get everything? I'm all ready to go."

"You're not going," I said. "Don't argue with me. I'm the one that's going. I can turn those switches on and off all right but if anything went wrong with that set I'd be helpless and there'd be two of you stuck out there. It's much more sensible for me to go and you to stay here at the controls. We'd all have a better chance."

He tried to argue with me but he finally had to admit that I was right. We agreed that I would make a preliminary survey of a half an hour or an hour to learn what I would be up against. We synchronized our watches and Petey promised to tune the Zone back in every thirty minutes until I came back. He cautioned me to make sure the floor was still marked on the other side, so I could find the control-zone. I still couldn't make out what it was like there from Petey's rather colorless account. I gathered he didn't like to talk about it much.

"What about those bats?" I asked him.

"Doc says he saw them. I never did. However, be on your guard all the time. He may not have been fooling about them."

He stepped to the set and I climbed on the platform.

"Ready?" he asked.

I nodded, trying to look nonchalant. We were both nervous as cats. I sat down and watched his hand reach for the switch.

"Here you go."

The feeling of electric tension in the air became stronger and I felt weak and dizzy. Petey's face blurred . . .

I FELT as though I had been sitting there on the stone floor, half asleep, for hours. I was stiff and cold and couldn't remember where I was or how I got there. A dry, musty-smelling wind was blowing little particles of dust against my face. The dust was eddying across the floor in the grey half-light, blowing aimlessly about, dancing in miniature whirlwinds. A steady whispering and sighing filled the air. I felt foggy and confused.

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Suddenly my mind cleared and I remembered Petey and the beam. I had come through! A thrill of excitement shot through me and I jumped up, wide awake, and looked at my watch. Thirty seconds had passed since Petey had thrown the switch! And now I was in Potter's Hall of Awful Shadow!

First I checked the chalk marks that Potter had made on the floor and then looked around. The place was incredibly huge and incredibly old. The dust of centuries of disuse lay thick on everything. The great hall was flanked by columns of pillars carved in fantastic shapes that rose up into the midnight gloom where the ceiling should be. At one end a huge stone figure squatted, the figure of a monstrosity the like of which never has been seen in our world. Nothing could possibly describe the awful and malignant monster of stone that crouched there, glaring sightlessly out of its three stone eyes. It bore no resemblance to any creature that had ever lived or had ever been imagined. I shuddered and hoped I would never meet the living original.

What light there was filtered in through the end opposite the idol, a cold, grey light shut off partially by three rows of colossal pillars, staggered so that from where I stood I could not see beyond them.

There was no sign of the bats that Petey had talked about. The place looked as though it had been deserted for centuries. I walked towards the front of the hall, flashing my light on all sides, noticing the evidences of disrepair. There were broken bits of masonry on the floors and scars on the walls and pillars showed where time had chipped away the stones.

I went on between the pillars, stepped out on a stone terrace and had my first look at this strange and silent world.

A strange, pale sun shone down out of a hazy sky that seemed to be near to the ground, as though this world were imprisoned in a sphere. Before me were the ruins of a city of stone, cold, grey, seemingly empty. Massive, broken buildings surrounded me on all sides. A long flight of ruined stairs led down from the terrace on which I stood to a large open plaza. The powdery dust, eddying and drifting in the dry wind was the only thing that moved and nothing could be heard except the eternal whispering and sighing of the wind itself. I felt lost and lonely as I stood there in the pale light of this dead planet, wondering what had become of the people that had built these mighty ruins.

I turned and looked back and up at the huge edifice I had just left. It seemed to be a temple of some sort.

Ancient carvings that seemed to be obliterated by time were faintly traced on the walls and pillars. Some of these looked like symbols, carved writings of an unknown language. Others might have represented animals and plants. One symbol occurred several times and in places of prominence—three circles joined together like links of a chain.

I DESCENDED the stairs and walked across the great plaza, scuffling through the dust and rubble of a vanished race. I felt that if ever there was a haunted city, this was it. A feeling of doom and tragedy was all about me. Not a living thing was to be seen. Not a leaf or a blade of grass. No birds flew against the grey sky. And yet Petey had spoken of giant bats, and somewhere, alive or dead, Doc Potter couldn't be far away.

I hallooed at the top of my voice and fired three shots in the air. There was no answer, only the wind and the whispering, shifting dust. I went on

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towards the massive ruins facing the temple from which I had come. To my left and right I could look down broad, endless avenues, choked with debris and lined with the skeletons of more buildings. This city must have been huge. It would take a long time to search it, building by building, for one man. Petey and I couldn't do it alone. I would have to get help. It was time, I saw by my watch, to get back to the control zone. I turned toward the temple and stopped dead in my tracks. There were the bats!

They had drifted down so silently that I hadn't been aware of them. There must have been a dozen of them on the steps leading to the stone terrace, cutting me off from my world. More were drifting down on the wind, giant black wings outstretched. They swooped down, skimming along the surface of the ground, ran a few steps and stopped, folding their bony wings awkwardly. There was something menacing in their silent scrutiny that made my skin crawl. I looked cautiously around to judge the distance to the buildings in back of me. I wanted to get my back to a wall, but it was too late. Four or five of the creatures had already settled on the plaza behind me and several more were banking through the air, circling, coming in for a landing that would have me surrounded.

Potter had been partly right about them. They were bigger than eagles but not as big as barns. They were ugly looking brutes with bodies the size of a man's, ape-like hands and feet, small, grotesque heads and features . . . their features *did* seem human! A terrible and frightening caricature of the human face!

I sensed something else, too. This was not a haphazard arrival of a band of giant, bat-like mammals. They were there with a purpose, working according to plan, surrounding me deliberately. I felt they were communicating with each other somehow.

OUT of the corner of my eye I saw a slight movement. I turned in time to see three of them moving cautiously in on me. As soon as I looked at them they froze, their glittering little eyes never moving from my face. Now there was a faint shuffling behind me and I whirled around to see that several more had moved up on me. Then the whole pack of them were moving, drifting like smoke across the plaza, closing in.

I started to run straight for the temple and the control zone. I had only seconds to make it. The pack in front of me rose up, leathery wings beating the air to thunder. There was a rush behind me, and on all sides. I raised the gun and fired point-blank into a black, ape-like face in my path. There was a human scream, lingering and blood-curdling. The crash of the shot stopped them for a moment and I reached the stairs to the terrace, firing twice more to clear a path.

I hurdled two writhing, fallen monsters and was part way up the stairs when they closed in again with a high-pitched gabbling noise. I emptied the gun into the jam of bodies and thrashing wings in front of me and charged into them.

Strong monkey-like hands clutched at me, tried to trip me. I landed a beautiful right on an ugly face and had the satisfaction of feeling breaking bone. Then a pile of foul-smelling bodies and flailing wings pulled me down to my knees but I struggled up again and fought my way savagely on for ten more feet. I got two or three good haymakers in before they pulled me down again and then I felt needle-like teeth biting

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into my arms and legs.

Immediately a heavy, langorous feeling crept over me. My arms and feet were heavy as lead and my brain seemed unable to make them co-ordinate. "Poison," I thought, dully, but I was by now too stupefied to care. I just wanted to lie down and go to sleep. I could no longer see . . .

I lay on my back looking at the stone ceiling, feeling a rough stone floor under me, listening to the whispering wind. I lay there for some time, not caring to move, as memory flooded back into me. At any rate I was alive, I thought, as I cautiously moved a hand experimentally. I rolled my head around until the side of my face was against the floor. I was in a small, stone room.

In the wall behind me a circular opening admitted light from outdoors and in the wall I was now facing there was a circular door across which a heavy stone slab had been rolled. A man was sitting against the wall with his knees drawn up, looking moodily at the floor between his feet and idly drawing figures in the dust.

"Dr. Livingston, I presume?" I said.

He jumped up.

"I've been sitting here for two hours, waiting for a chance to say that to you. Oh well, it isn't very funny anyway. How do you feel?"

I sat up dizzily.

"I guess I'm all here. Where am I, as they always say in situations like this?"

"We are prisoners off the Bat King, held in the Tower of Silence in the heart of the City of Dreadful Doom. I don't know what They call it but They couldn't have a better name than that. By the way, I'm Potter, the Mad Hermit of Zodiac. Everybody seems to call me Doc, to my distress, so you might as well too. You must have been broadcast here by the good Petey in a laudable effort to rescue me." This guy is all right, I thought.

"Johnny Shipman," I said and we solemnly shook hands. "Now, what's your theory about all this? How do we get out of this place, the City of Dreadful Gloom?"

"Doom. Dreadful Doom. Oh, well, it doesn't go by that name among the natives. Look." He led me over to the circular window.

THERE were no bars in the window and I saw why. It must have been a sheer drop of three hundred feet to the debris-filled street below. The city's broken walls and roofs were spread before us, fading away into the drifting clouds of dust that must blow continuously over this dying planet. Great drifts of dust smothered many of the lower buildings in long, billowing dunes.

"Very pretty," I said, trying to match his easy nonchalance. "A place I'd like to settle right down in. Only not very much. What do you suppose those screwball flying gorillas are saving us for, a stew? But first, WHERE ARE WE?"

Doc Potter squinted out the window.

"Roughly, about three hundred feet above Thomas J. Lynch's Bar & Grill on Hudson Street. That's about as close as I can make it. Look over there. That's where we came through. Got a cigarette? Thanks. Been wanting one of these things for a long time now. Lucky those flying bombies didn't take anything from you. Or did they?

"One gun missing," I muttered, going through my clothes. "One flashlight. Some skin off my knuckles. I seem to have everything else, which wasn't much. Well, what's the next move? What are those monkeys planning to do

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with us—or don't you know?"

"I don't know but I imagine something pretty unpleasant," he answered cheerfully. "I have some theories about this place that I want to mull over, quietly. Right now the important thing is to get back to the control zone. Those bats aren't just going to leave us alone in here. They've got some pretty gruesome plans for our future and we'd better get out before they start putting them into effect. I think we can do it."

"Fine! How?"

"I've been studying the outside of this building. You'll notice there are wide cracks between the stones. The best thing to do would be to wait for night and then climb down the outside of the tower." He beamed on me pleasantly.

I stuck my head out the window again and shuddered.

"Let's hear the next-best plan. Those cracks don't look big enough to suit me. What's the routine around here, anyway? Do they feed us?"

"If you can call it feeding. It consists of some kind of dough-like cakes and some pretty foul water that one of the chore-boys brings around towards evening. It will keep you alive, if it doesn't kill you." He thought for a moment. "A bat-man comes through that door with water in a jug and those cakes. We might use the old sick-man technique on him. You lie on the ground, groaning and taking on, I bend over you. There are one or two more of them outside the door, sort of standing guard. They must want to keep us alive and in good shape or they would have killed us right off. At least they wouldn't be bothering to feed us. So when they see you are dying, apparently, they rush in to find out what's the matter. Then we leap up, taking them by surprise, overpower them and make good our escape! Simple?"

"No it isn't simple! Who do you think I am, Flash Gordon? I never had any practice overpowering regular gorillas, and these can fly to boot!"

"There's an escape like that in every adventure story that's ever been written and it works every time!" he said in an aggrieved voice.

"Maybe so, but I have a hunch these monkeys haven't read any adventure stories. Listen, Potter! All your plans involve climbing down the outside of buildings or overpowering twice our number of these things! Each one of them is stronger than I am and I haven't climbed down the outside of a building since I used to sneak out nights when I was a kid! High places always gave me the willies anyway."

HE SEEMED to actually be enjoying our predicament.

"Why, my boy, do you mean to say that a bunch of dirty, smelly flying apes can keep two free-born American citizens in captivity? We must outwit them!"

"How about getting in touch with the American consul?"

"In this case, impractical." All this time we had been going over the walls and floors and testing the strange, circular door. Potter went on, "I've been observing our flying friends and I've come to the conclusion that they're not real bright. They have two physical characteristics that we haven't; they can fly and their bite is mildly poisonous. It seems to work like an anaesthetic which wears off in a couple of hours."

"What about this city. If they could build all this they're surely bright enough to keep us prisoners if they want to."

"They didn't build it! I know that much. This city, these buildings,

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weren't meant for them. I had a chance to nose around a bit before they jumped me. They don't fit! For instance, there are benches that these bats can't sit on without breaking off their wings. And stairways! What would a race that can fly be doing with stairways? I've watched them coming through that door and they have to bend over to get their wings through. If they'd built it they would have made it bigger. On top of all that, I found some wall carvings that had regular human figures on them! They were pretty worn and chipped and there were only fragments but I know they didn't have wings. They didn't look like us, either, but they may have been stylized, like Egyptians carvings were, before the Christian era.

"My theory is that these bats are a much lower order of life than the original inhabitants. I also think they had something to do with the disappearance of the people. They're a vicious lot but they haven't any intelligence. We should be able to outsmart them."

"You say that one or two stand guard at the door and one comes in with food. What's outside the door?"

"I don't know. I was unconscious too when they brought me here. If my theory is right and this place was built for human beings there must be some way to get down. I wonder how that door locks? It's just a circular slab that rolls back into the wall."

Suddenly there was one of them in the room with us. It hadn't come in either the door or the window. It materialized before our eyes, just like that. Potter said, "Good God!" softly. I just stared. Where had it come from? It made no move toward us but stood with its leathery wings folded, staring at us with its glittering eyes. There seemed to be more concentrated evil in that unwinking scrutiny than anything I had ever seen!

"W-we mustn't let it see we're scared," Potter whispered. "Whatever it wants it is out to get it now. Keep a stiff upper lip!"

THE mad little eyes in that unholy face fixed themselves on mine. I stared right back at it. I tried to remember whether a human could outstare an animal or not. I don't know how long we stood there, unmoving, glaring at each other. As my mind grew numb I realized that I couldn't look away if I tried. Everything faded out but those eyes. I was alone in black space and they burned into me. My mind was being held, examined, emptied of every thought and memory. Then the eyes faded out and there was only blackness.

Once more I found myself lying on the stone floor. It was night outside and the room was thick with darkness in the corners, lightened only by a flickering gleam that came through the doorway. With a start I realized the door was open!

The bat-man and Potter were staring at each other silently. Potter was rigid and sweat was pouring down his face. I sat up slowly but neither noticed me and I saw they were both in a trance. Through the door I heard a scuffling noise and a dry rattle. Another bat-man was out there, maybe more. I got cautiously and silently to my feet.

A heavy, crude jug that seemed to be full of water had been placed on the floor of our cell. Moving as silently as the night I crept to it and picked it up slowly. It was a heavy but unwieldy weapon but it was the only one I could get. Potter and the bat-man still stood as though carved from stone.

The best attack is a surprise attack. Catch him off guard and the fight is half won. I came out the door running and

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swung the heavy jug with all my strength before he realized what was happening. He went over backwards, ugly wings thrashing futilely on the dusty stones. I jumped on him, landing with all my weight on his stomach with my knee. The breath went out of him with a loud whoosh and I smashed my fist into his misshapen head with everything I had. His skull cracked against the floor.

I looked up to see that he had been the only one in the room and, without waiting to find out whether he was out, I raced back into our cell. I collided with the other beauty, who had come out of his trance, in the doorway and we both went over in a mad tangle of flailing arms and wings. I got my hands on his throat and tried to smash his head against the stone floor but he was fighting savagely.

He was much stronger than I, though his wings seemed to handicap him. His ape's hands gripped my arms and legs with crushing force, tearing me loose. We rolled over and over.

I couldn't keep it up much longer. He tore one of my hands loose, then the other. His ugly face was getting closer, sharp yellow fangs bared. If he bit me once I was done for. But at this point he suddenly went rigid and then collapsed.

"I knew they were dumb! They never even took this knife away from me!" Doc said, pulling it out of the creature's neck. Must have found the right spot. Folded him up in a flash! You all right? We ought to be getting out of here."

I WAS gasping for breath painfully but I nodded and staggered to my feet, swaying dizzily. I was still staggering as we went into the next room, a circular chamber with a pointed ceiling, where the guard lay. The light came, I saw now, from a lamp on the floor that burned some kind of oil. It was smoky and flickering but we took it up and looked around us.

"Wait," Doc said and bending over the fallen bat-man he neatly and efficiently cut his throat. I felt sick as blood bubbled out and flowed unevenly on the floor.

"Best to make sure of him," Potter said. "Come on."

There were several circular exits in the room. We chose one at random and ran down a stone corridor that had an arched ceiling. Luck was still with us. We came to a circular staircase that wound down into the depths of the building. We started down cautiously.

We had gone perhaps fifty feet when the torch went out. We shook the little lamp but it was empty. The blackness closed in around us like a solid thing.

"Keep going," Potter whispered. "Feel each step before you put your weight on it. Save your matches for an emergency."

We felt our way, step by step, down that nightmare stair. From time to time we paused, listening for sounds of pursuit. Then we went on again. They seemed interminable. Sometimes we felt a draught of musty air and knew we were passing the entrance to one of the floors. At one of these we stopped and I lit one of my precious matches. The feeble light showed only a patch of floor littered with the crumbling remnants of what may have been furniture. Beyond was blackness and the smell of death. We went on down.

Suddenly I stopped, frozen.

"Listen, Potter! Something's coming up!" We held our breaths and stood tensely. Far below us in the black, winding tube we heard the faint shuffle of bare feet on stone! The

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noise came nearer and nearer. There was a faint rustle and click behind me as Potter opened his knife. Now the steps were almost on us.

Instinctively we flattened against the outer wall though the space was so narrow that nothing could get by us without touching. I struck a match but the matchstick snapped in two and the head spun off into the blackness after only a few sparks had fizzed weakly for a fraction of a second.

Before I could get another match the steps went by us with a rush, seemingly right over our heads, and died away in the blackness above. Potter let out his breath in a long, shaky sigh.

"What next?" I whispered. "Now we have things that walk on the ceiling!"

"Come on, let's get out of here! I don't know what that was and I don't want to know! I've seen enough to keep me in bad dreams the rest of my life!"

We went on some more. When it seemed that I had spent a lifetime in those endless stairs I asked.

"How far do you think we've come?"

"Five hundred and thirty-two steps. We should be almost down. When we get to . . . oh my golly, here it comes again!"

THERE was a rush of footsteps pattering down the stairs behind us and we could hear a faint gibbering and squeaking.

"That doesn't sound like the batmen!" Potter muttered nervously.

"Whatever it is, I'm taking a poke at it! I can't stand much more of this scurry, scurry, scurry! Let me by!" I braced myself and as the footsteps were almost on top of me I swung hard. My fist swished through empty air and I fell off-balance against Potter, who yelled, "Help! They got me!"

"Quiet! It's me!" The footsteps and squeaking stopped. We listened, holding our breaths again, but there was no more noise.

Once more we started down. After a bit Potter touched my shoulder.

"Six hundred steps! We should be near ground-level now. Look for an exit." I put a hand on either wall and went on. Soon my left hand came to a break and simultaneously I saw a broken rectangle of pale light at some distance from me.

"This ought to be it," I said softly. I had the feeling that the stairs went on down but we stumbled out on a level floor and made our way towards the light.

We stepped out cautiously into a litter-filled street. A small, pale moon lit the ruined city. There was no sign of any life.

Our spirits rose, now that we were out of the close, dark stair-well.

"This way," Doc whispered, and we ran off through the thick dust, dodging huge stones that had fallen from the buildings, keeping always in the blackest shadows.

We didn't have far to go. We rounded a corner into the plaza and stopped in dismay. The temple steps and the terrace were black with figures. We looked around frantically for a place to hide and finally saw a small, black opening in the wall behind us. We squeezed through.

Doc looked cautiously out at the plaza.

"I don't think they saw us. Maybe they'll go away and we can make a run for it. Oh, when will we see Petey's honest face again?"

"Now where do you suppose we've ended up this time?" I muttered bit-

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terly, trying to see into the thick, dusty gloom.

"This is the Temple of Vengeance!" he said, darkly. "Here is the place where human sacrifices are made to the dreaded Hooded Ones!"

"Listen, Potter! Do you always have to think up such creepy names? Why can't this be the Hall of Happy Laughter and Fun? Things are bad enough as they are!"

"Hist, comrade! We are in deadly peril! Even now the Hooded Ones are all about us . . . Oh my God, they really are!"

We heard again the patter of feet and a faint gibbering! It was close, all around us! I hastily struck one of my last matches.

There was a circle of pale faces in the flickering light. Human faces!

THERE were eight or nine of them, short, fragile-looking, the color of the dust from which they seemed to have risen. Queer, ragged garments partially covered their slender bodies. The match wavered and went out, leaving me with the impression that these poor shadows of humanity were no menace to us. They even seemed to be friendly. Their squeaky voices came softly through the darkness and hands tugged at me gently.

"They want us to come with them," I called to Potter. "Don't try to fight them. I think they're friendly."

We were led through pitch blackness over an uneven floor for a short distance. There was a rumbling noise and a stone doorway rolled back, letting in a little light. They took us into a long passageway that sloped down into the ground, lit by more of those flickering little oil lamps in niches along the wall.

The stone doorway rumbled shut behind us. Two of the little people scuttled ahead of us down the passageway and the rest indicated that we should wait where we were. We sat down wearily in the dust and the others grouped themselves at a short distance away, squeaking among themselves and seeming to regard us reverently.

Potter was looking around with interest.

"You know," he said, "I think these are the original natives, or what's left of them. The bat-men got the upper hand in some way and must have wiped out most of the human race. Here and there little colonies of refugees like this one have survived and are hiding out underground."

"How could they hide out from creatures that can go right through stone walls and appear out of nowhere?"

"I don't know," he replied. "Maybe these people can do just as well. They must have some defense from them and some places where they are safe. That bat-man who hypnotized us was reading our minds in some way. Trying to get information from us. It's got me stumped."

"And you said they aren't bright! They can appear and disappear at will, hypnotize people and read their minds! What does anybody have to do to qualify for 'bright' with you?"

"I *still* claim they aren't bright! I'll admit they can do things that seem astounding to us, but then they turn around and do something so stupid that it seems a six-year-old boy could outsmart them! Like leaving me with a knife. Look how we got away from two of them! My theory is that these little people and the bat-men are the decadent remnants of two races that at one time were very advanced. From the looks of things they must have fought it out almost to the last man.

"Now, you take those bat-men.

(Continued on page 203)

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»»» *Introducing* «««

THE AUTHOR

CARLOS McCUNE was born in Salt Lake City, Utah, twenty-nine years ago. He is the fourth child in a family of six girls and two boys, and he is convinced that everyone should belong to a large family. He was educated through junior high school in the public schools, and graduated from a private high school. He entered the University of Utah at the age of sixteen, intending to become a chemical engineer, but after a quarter of engineering he learned that the school had no accredited course in chemical engineering, so he went into pure chemistry.

The depression had started just about the time his college career started, and after two years of college conditions were so bad that he had to drop out of school. Up to this time he had spent his summers in Wyoming with his father who was an oil producer in charge of several fields, and the last three summers had worked in different fields as roustabout, truck driver, and pumper.

He spent one summer opening up an old gold mine in Montana. Conditions at the mine were rather primitive, no machinery to speak of, just hand tools. Every foot of the way was drilled by single-jacking. The ties and even the spikes were made by hand. He would walk down the mountain to town twice a week and carry mail, provisions and blasting powder back on his back. Sundays were spent hunting and fishing or devising an automatic shower, or a bed with rubber springs.

The next summer was spent as a surveyor in the mountain tops of central Utah. Most of the work was done in the tall timber above 9,000 feet, much of this was above timber line. This was his most memorable summer. The depression was in its depths when this work was discontinued in the fall, and he went to Los Angeles to look for work. The second day he was there he got a job as bank messenger. He worked for the bank for a year, attending night school in the meantime—studying law, at the end of which time he was offered a position with a wholesale oil distributor in southern Utah, and since it appeared as though this would lead to an opportunity to return to school he accepted the position. After a year of this he returned to school, taking up his chemistry where he had left off four years previously.

After four years of chemistry he decided to study medicine because he was interested in chemico-medical research, so he took a teaching fellowship in chemistry for a year while he completed his premedical work. The following year he entered medical school, and on May first, 1943, received his M.D.

He became interested in writing at an early age, and at the age of twelve sent his first contribution to a western story magazine—which promptly returned it. He reread his story and decided the publisher knew his business. He rewrote the story when he was required to write a short story for English in high school, and again as a freshman in college. The first thing he had published was a high school essay on "The Development of Chemistry." He continued writing, but submitted nothing until he completed "Caverns of Time" which he thought might be considered.

For the past year he has been the only resident "doctor" at a maternity home in New Orleans, and has learned quite a bit about life from this experience.

On December fourth, 1942, he married a girl from his home town. This was about two weeks before he heard of the acceptance of "Caverns of Time," but he doesn't know whether there was any connection between the two good fortunes or not.

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READER'S PAGE

SUGGESTIONS

Sirs:

I am not an habitual contributor to reader's columns, not being a fan of any one publication, or of any one type of stories. Still, I think your "Reader's Page" and similar columns in many magazines are quite the most interesting portion of the book.

I wish to offer a suggestion in line with some recent discussions in your publication, but first, to allow you to determine, if possible, what any suggestions I might make are worth, I will briefly describe my reading habits: First, I am not a fantasy or science fiction fan, nor for that matter a fan of any type. I like good stories regardless of type, locale, or time. In the past twenty years I have read many and practically all of the pulps, but as a general rule there is so much trash to wade through to find the few pearls (worthwhile stories) that I have of late acquired a habit of buying books and am not thus forced to skip through some worthless rot to get something I like.

However, there are a number of novels published in pulp which I feel are good enough to be in book form that never get there, so I still take a few magazines.

One suggestion I would like to make is selfish, I admit, as in the past year in the interest of space conservation, I have picked several fine stories from your publication and bound them into omnibuses, making books for my library which I would otherwise be without. I have trimmed my own edges, but naturally not making as neat a job as if done by machine; so let's have trimmed edges.

Suggestion number two: eliminate some of the shorts, which I do not care for, and print at least two novels a month. This also is selfish, but I make no apologies, for after reading the "Reader's Page" for a number of months, I feel that most of the suggestions are selfish.

However, I will say that taking the good with the bad, you have the best publication of the type that is or has been on the market.

WALTER CRESS,
410 Western Ave.,
Urbana, Ill.

If we trimmed our edges, and you had books bound, would not a second trimming cut too much off? We suggest that you do as we do, and have your selected stories bound by a book-binder, who will trim the edges by machine. This costs only a nominal sum, and the result is excellent. We won't eliminate shorts, naturally, because some of our best fiction is very short. Witness Phil Stong's Omnibus of two years ago, in which our magazines placed three short stories.—ED.

OUR TITLES?

Sirs:

May I say that among all that I have read, your March issue really hits the top? I'm not saying it couldn't be better, but then, I don't like perfection anyhow. Your best story this issue was "Enchanted Bookshelf" by William P. McGivern.

I wonder just how many readers appreciate the obvious efforts on the behalf of some authors to dress up a not-so-extra-special story with an extra-special title. I've noticed it a lot, but I admire anyone with a flair for making plays on words.

MARTHA E. RENSEL,
3511 East 104th Street,
Cleveland, Ohio.

Maybe if you knew how our titles are actually conceived, you would not make such a statement. About half of our titles are titles dreamed up by your editor to replace titles which, rather than enhance a story, detract from it. Most authors actually do not "dress" up their stories with catchy titles! We resent your inference that we try to palm off bad or weak stories by covering them with deceptive titles. In the first place, we select the best stories being written, and then we give them every aid a good editor can think of, to make them even more entertaining. Certainly a good title is an asset, isn't it? We try to make our titles "tell" the story, intrigue your interest. Many authors, and sadly, many magazines, use titles which are sheer gibberish. Titles like "Theotlxca of Zizcla Goes to Plaxxatlcx." How many titles have you seen like that? Well, do you blame us for not using them in our magazine?—ED.

STRANGE "SEEING"!

Sirs:

While reading the May issue of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES, I came across an article "How We See" by A. Morris. One paragraph interested me more than any of the others. This was the paragraph that said we see things upside down but interpret them as right-side up. I thought the following would interest you.

One day while in English class, I took off my glasses, turned them around, put them *across* my

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eyes and tried to look through them. As I looked, everything was upside down; the desks, and the teacher. I don't know why this happened. It had never happened before, nor has it happened since, though I have tried it many times.

BEATRISS TRAUB,
1049 N. Mount Street,
Baltimore, Md.

Perhaps one of our occulist readers can explain this occurrence to you.—ED.

WHO WAS ANUBIS?

Sirs:

It seems everyone, including myself, liked the story "Sammy Calls A Noobus." Well, when I read it, something said to me, "that's not right." So here is an excerpt from National Geographic of September, 1913, on Egyptology and Anubis.

"The Jackal was sacred to Anubis, who, in the myth of Osiris, was one of the chief deities concerned in winning immortality for the human race. Anubis was the friend of the righteous dead and guided the souls across the trackless desert to the field of Aalu. According to Egyptian theology, the judgment came immediately after death and was held in the Hall of Maat, where 42 judges listened to the plea of the deceased that he had been sinless and where the heart of the dead man was weighed in the scales against the ostrich feather—symbol of Maat—goddess of truth.

"This weighing was conducted under the eyes of Thoth, scribe of the gods, and of Anubis, the 'Opener of the Ways,' who stands close to the balance ready to start quickly on his journey with the justified dead, while a little farther off crouches the monster, Ament, 'Devourer,' waiting for his prey if the decision is adverse."

Norton's Anubis was evil. Perhaps this is another Anubis?

DON GARLINGHOUSE,
1509 Harney Ave.,
Rapid City, So. Dak.

No, we're afraid Norton meant the same Anubis, and he's made a mistake in assuming that Anubis was an evil entity. How about it, Norton?—ED.

McCAULEY AND BRENGLE

Sirs:

McCauley's beautiful cover for the May issue is the finest cover that has ever adorned your magazine. "Return to Lilliput" is a great fantasy and cannot be classified with the other stories. Don Wilcox has a serious rival in William Brengle, whose initial try at the fantasy field is a crowning triumph. Let's have another yarn by him very soon!

EUGENE BREWSTER,
16 W. 10th St., N. Y.

Fantasy fans took to Brengle's story with more praise than an author new to the field usually gets. He'll be back, in the August issue, with "The Star Shepard"—as good (if not better) as his first!—ED.

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OTHER WORLDS

(Continued from page 199)

They have powers that are purely physical, even to their ability to disappear. It's probably a power that we ourselves have, only we have never learned to develop it. The same thing with their hypnotizing and mind-reading. We are just beginning to learn about those things! To the bat-men they're as natural as breathing and walking are to us! But the difference between us and the bat-men is that they have lost the ability to reason whereas we can reason like all get-out, so we can outsmart them every time! In other words, to sum up my fine, five-dollar theory, they don't know how to use their powers to their best advantage. Haven't got the brains to."

TWO little people scuttled up the passageway and there was renewed squealing and excitement. They motioned us respectfully to come with them and we went down the corridor for a long way. At the end of it another door was rolled back and we entered a large room where a crowd of the little people seemed to be expecting us. They were a sorry looking lot but it was evident that our arrival was causing a lot of excitement. They swarmed around us, trying to touch us, and there was a clamor of squeaky voices. We must have seemed like giants or gods to them, towering above them by over two feet.

An old man, who seemed to be the chief, pushed the people back a little and then made a long, reverent speech. At the conclusion Potter recited Lin-

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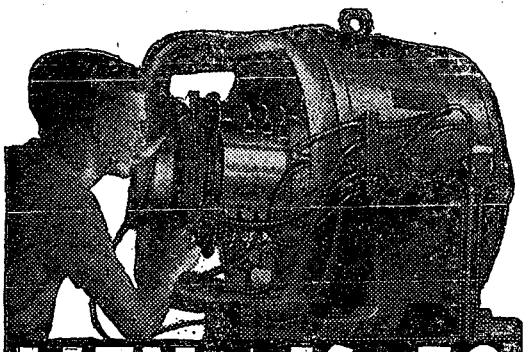

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coln's Gettysburg Address with a great deal of solemn feeling and then he seized the chief's right hand and shook it gravely. The effect was tremendous. They actually cheered.

After we had eaten some queer, tasteless food and had some brackish water to drink we sat down with the chief and a group of the elders and tried to converse. We got over that we were from another world, that our world was full of people like ourselves, that we had big cities and could fly through the air, converse with each other at great distances and, in short, had a pretty snappy civilization. They nodded eagerly, as though our story was confirming something they already suspected.

Then the chief and the elders, with great dignity, ushered us into another underground room, a vast hall.

"Softly, comrade!" whispered Potter, "We enter the Holy of Holies!"

Indeed, they all showed the utmost reverence for the place. The walls were covered with carved figures and there were statues and what seemed to be models arranged neatly around the room on pedestals and in cases. Everything was kept clean and free of the dust that had penetrated everywhere else.

We were taken ceremoniously to a life-sized figure of a man seated on an elaborately carved throne. It was a wonderful piece of work, ancient as the crumbling city itself but so beautifully carved that it seemed to breathe life. A vigorous, intelligent face on a powerful body. The chief was telling us about this statue and as his squeaky, ineffectual voice droned on I couldn't help comparing the statue of the Ancient with his degenerate descendant. They must have been a magnificent race in their prime.

This hall contained the history of

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their race and a few relics of their great civilization. On one pedestal was a gleaming model of what must have been a great air-liner; seven decks of stainless steel and glittering glass windows. On another was an actual single-seat flyer, a battered but beautifully-streamlined, wingless dragonfly with tarnished controls and the remnants of upholstery on its single, bucket-shaped seat. Down the center of the hall, on a long table, was a model of this city as it had been in its glorious past, with broad, green boulevards and hanging gardens and terraces bright with colored awnings.

One scene painted on the wall was interesting. It showed a great gathering of some queer people, not the bat-men, apparently witnessing an execution, or some sort of ceremonial torture. A human figure, a female, was imprisoned in a sort of glass cabinet, which had access to another enclosure which housed some mighty horrible looking insects. I guessed what would happen when the gates between the enclosures were opened! I shuddered.

But smashing through a great cliff wall behind, was the most tremendous drilling machine I had ever seen. Man, the science of this ancient world! It must have been terrific. I had no opportunity to spend time conjecturing as to what kind of a war machine it might have been.

POTTER had been examining the wall-carvings and now he called me over.

"Here's the history of these people, if we can make it out. Look, here they are, building this city. And here are the bat-men! They used them as slaves or laborers. So that's what happened! The slaves revolted."

The chief seemed to know what we

(Continued on page 207)

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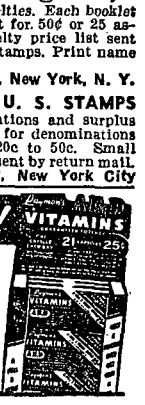

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SUSPENDED ANIMATION

ALL of us have read in the pages of science-fiction magazines about men and women who have been frozen alive for years—even centuries—and then brought back to life. Interesting flights of fancy, we mused, and passed on to the next "thriller."

But another step forward in research on suspended animation was recently announced by Dr. Basile J. Luyet and Dr. M. C. Hartung of St. Louis University. The only successful work up to this time had been the experiments in which chilling had been used to stop the vital processes of single-celled yeast microbes and bacteria which were later awakened from their "freezing" with apparently no harmful effects. However, these latest tests were conducted with vinegar eels, a more complex organism which live in soured apple juice and often grow as large as .08 inch.

These organisms were submerged very quickly into liquid air at a temperature of a negative 320° F. Great speed was required in the process to prevent the water in the eels' bodies from becoming ice crystals which tended to kill the eels. The eels were kept frozen for 30 minutes and then they were thrust very quickly into water at 86° F. In a matter of five minutes, the eels were once again swimming about as if nothing had happened. However, most of the eels used in the experiment suffered premature deaths.

Further research with suspended animation is being conducted and the day may not be far distant when even men can be safely put to "sleep" for years at a time.

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THIS feature will be discontinued for the duration in the interests of the safety of our armed forces and of national security.

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OTHER WORLDS
(Continued from page 205)

were doing. He led us to one corner of the room and pointed.

"I think he means that the history starts here," I said. "It's like a tapestry in stone. This is all allegorical stuff. Birth in Fire and Water." I traced the ancient carvings with my finger. "Creation of the world. Only they have three worlds. What do you suppose . . . ?"

The chief squeaked excitedly and held up three fingers, pointing to the three worlds that were carved in such a way that they looked superimposed on each other. We both saw it once.

"Why, he means that there really *are* three worlds! Ours and his and . . ."

Catching our eye again, the chief pointed to the right-hand world and then to us. Then he pointed to the center world and indicated himself and the elders. When he came to the left-hand world he flapped his arms in imitation of flying.

"The b a t s ! '' Potter exclaimed. "They came from another planet that is around us too! So that's where they appear from! They must be able to commute between the two!"

"He seems to know about our world, too. I wonder if the bats do."

We walked along, studying the stone tapestry. The chief led us along, pointing to incidents in the sculptured history. There were battles between the peoples of this planet and then peace. The land bloomed like a garden and great cities rose, linked by giant airliners, like the model on the pedestal. Then came the bat-men, first as slaves and then as enemies.

We noticed a curious thing, over and over. Through it all, the men and women who died or were killed were represented as passing through to our world—the one we had left.

We puzzled over this for a long time.

"Do you suppose our world is a heaven to these people?" Doc mused. "Do they, when they die, reach the next plane of life and get born again on our planet?"

"There's trouble in Heaven, if that's true," I said. "I'd hate to have to tell them of the mess they're going to get into. How do you explain the civilization that was superior to ours, if we're supposed to be on a higher plane?"

"I don't explain it. I want to go home and wrap a cold towel around my head and give it a lot more thought. But, you know, there are inherited racial memories in us that we have never explained. Fear of bats is one. Why should we always think of our little bats as evil creatures? Why are imps of Satan always pictured as semi-human creatures with bat wings? The battle of the humans and the bat-men here may have survived in our memories and taken the form of myths about the fallen angels and the nether-regions." He was silent for awhile.

"YOU know, there may be other worlds beyond ours. There are plenty of stories about them. Every religion has its Heaven, just as our world seems to be a Heaven to our little cousins, here. Perhaps this is where we all started. We may be one step nearer to solving the mystery of life!"

"If you're right," I said, "The bat-man was trying to learn the secret of getting to our world! Good lord, you don't think he was able to do it, to find out about your atom re-arranger, when you were under? Those beauties might get through to us and go to work on us!"

"That's what they were after. I rather sensed it. However, they think

(Concluded on page 209)

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WARRIORS OF OTHER WORLDS

By MORRIS J. STEELE

The warrior of Venus, which is mostly a world of water, would do most of his fighting on the sea, facing savage sea-air creatures spawned by an almost landless planet

(See Back Cover)

VENUS is a world very much like our own in almost all respects. It is only slightly smaller, its gravity is about the same, and it is slightly closer to the sun than we are. It seems logical that civilization must have developed on this world almost along the same stage of development as on ours.

There are several basic differences, not of any spectacular nature, however, which would make for a different sort of civilization, and a different sort of inhabitant, and bring to bear a different sort of physical circumstances which would make it strange to us.

First, the lack of land would give precedence to the evolution of creatures of the sea. It isn't too much to imagine, as artist Malcolm Smith has in his vivid painting reproduced on our back cover, that a form of life, springing directly from the amoeba, has developed a creature capable of living in the two predominant elements of its world, air and water. A giant specialized creature.

We can safely assume that this creature is as at home in the air as in the water; since the atmosphere of Venus is so filled with water vapor, that to a human being, it might almost be like trying to breathe under water. Thus, the sea creature of Venus might find it a very easy jump up the ladder of evolution to becoming an air creature as well as a water creature.

Perhaps, as seems to be the case, human life, with its greater brain capacity, would have developed on Venus to almost as great an extent as on earth, but with the difference that its civilization would proceed along lines dictated by the presence of more water than land. In other words, they would be a sea-going race. Their means of travel would be mostly by water. Even their cities might be built on water.

Because of this encroachment on the domain of the strictly water creature, friction would eventually result, and warfare would be carried on between the two forms of life.

It is this warfare, and the warrior it develops, that we deal with here.

Let's picture a battle between the humans of Venus and the amoebic denizens of the sea and air who fight to repel the invaders from their own element.

The humans have developed fast, sleek, streamlined type ships of war, ships which are possibly partially surface ships, and partially submersibles. These ships have been commissioned to clear a certain area of seascape from the amoeba creatures so that a new floating city may be built.

Our fleet sallys forth, invades the area in question. The challenge is met and accepted, and bursting from the water, the amoeba people imitate the flying fish of earth, and soar toward the ships to the attack.

They are not a primitive race, by any means, having developed for ages, and they have weapons which are quite effective. We might imagine them to be powerful water pistols and guns—even giant water cannons, firing a pellet of water as destructive as a shell on earth, enhanced by the explosive force of water suddenly converted to steam.

Several of the humans' ships are hit by water cannon, and even by water torpedoes launched from the ocean floor. Humans abandon ship, and the more or less hand to hand battle begins.

Ungracefully the amoeba people fly toward them, assail them with small water guns. A water pellet, on the head of a victim, is as dangerous and effective as a bullet.

The amoeba people fight "hand-to-hand" too, using their heavy, strong octopus-like tentacles to strangle, and to drag helpless victims into the water, where the struggle becomes an unequal one in the favor of the amoeba.

Of course, our humans would not have attacked if they did not have a change to conquer. Depth bombs, fired from other ships, catch reinforcing amoeba brigades while still under water, stunning them by the hundreds. Bodies rise to the surface, and are picked off by rifle fire of the humans. Small speed boats take off from the larger ships and sweep around, killing all amoebas in sight, either in the water or in the air.

When the battle is over, and the humans have won, the area taken over is protected by powerful nets, and by mine fields which serve to keep out raiders from under the surface. Submarine ships hold constant vigil. The danger of attack from the air is less, because the amoeba is not naturally a denizen of the air, and his attack is clumsy from that element.

Perhaps it happens, too, that the amoeba people manage to break through the nets, escape the depth bombs, and sink human cities by blasting at them from beneath. Yes, warfare on Venus is a grim business too!

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OTHER WORLDS
(Concluded from page 207)

that we are able to do it physically, the way they go from their world to this. He probably got a lot of electrical data out of my head that was just Greek to him. Of course, he's dead now, so if he did learn anything he can't pass it on. I don't want to risk getting caught by them again because I may be wrong, but I had a very distinct impression that Pokey Joe up there was baffled. It was way over his head. They ain't bright, Johnny, they just ain't bright!"

"I hope you're right. Let's try and make the control zone and point out to Petey and Gladstone that they're Angels in Heaven. It ought to perk them up, kind of. Besides, I can't go any more of this food here. I feel as though I had swallowed a cannon ball."

THROUGH sign language and pointing to the model city we got over to the chief where we wanted to go and that we wanted to avoid the bat-men. He sent some of his little people with us and they guided us through their labyrinth of underground tunnels. We came out through a tiny exit in the rear of the Idol in the Hall of Awful Shadow. The grey light of day was filtering through the pillars in front as we found the chalk marks on the floor.

We huddled together on the dusty stones, squeezing ourselves into as small a space as possible in order to get entirely within the control zone. The great stone idol stared malevolently out of the gloom at us with its three stone eyes.

"I'll have to find out about that frozen horror when I come back next time," Doc said. "Right now I only hope it doesn't start howling. That seems to bring on the bats . . . oh-oh, here we go again!"

The howling started as a low growl and rapidly rose to a loud wail, rising and falling, seeming to come from all sides. The little people squeaked in terror and scuttled away rapidly, disappearing behind the pillars.

"I hope that guy isn't out having a beer now!" I yelled above the howling.

A bat-man appeared above us, circling slowly, then another and then five all at once. They circled faster and faster, dipping down towards us and drawing in closer.

"Petey, Petey, for God's sake!" I was praying. One of them banked up vertically, dove straight at us! They all were coming with that awful gabbling noise! I felt dizzy and shut my eyes.

There was a crash and Doc was yelling.

"Turn it off! Turn it off!" and the howling had changed in pitch and intensity. I had a funny feeling that I had fainted and looked around dizzily. Doc and Petey must have crashed head-on into each other and were rolling around on the floor, both shouting at once. Gladstone was under a bed, howling with fright. I jumped off the platform and cut both switches and the tubes went dead. I could hear auto horns honking through the open window and the warm sunlight of an August day in New York streamed in through the skylight.

Doc sat up, breathing heavily, and looked at the goggling Petey.

"Petey, my boy, I think we are all coming down with mumps! Will you mix up three glasses of my Mumps Preventative? You know . . . one third tapwater and two thirds Rye."

"Go easy on the tapwater in mine," I said. "There's going to be a party in Heaven tonight!"

THE END

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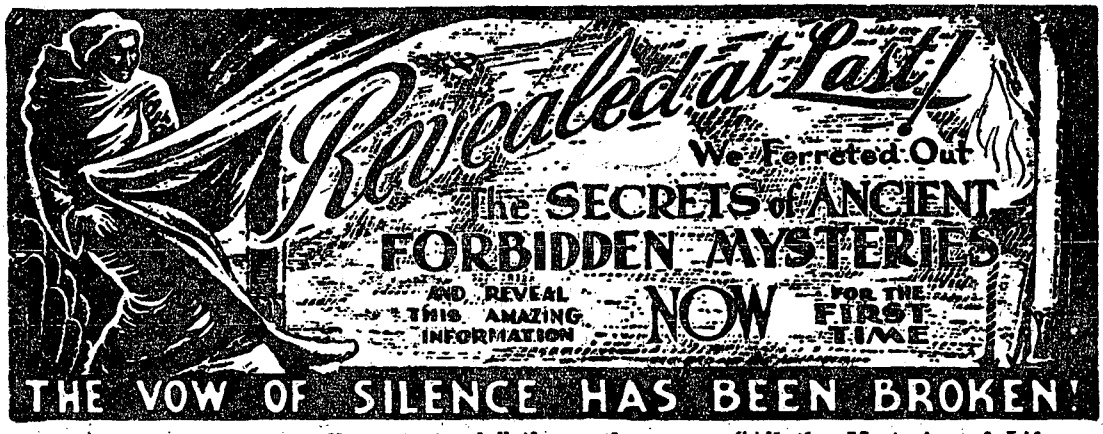

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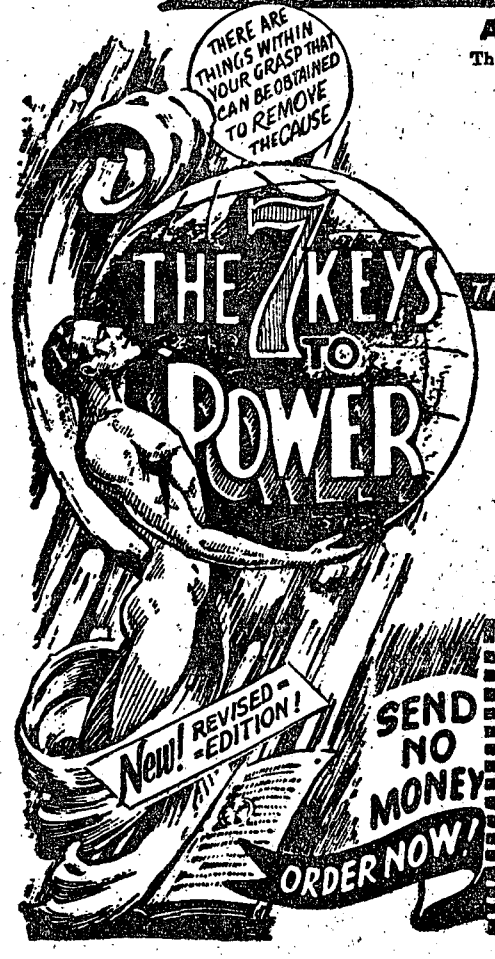

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—Who became "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man"

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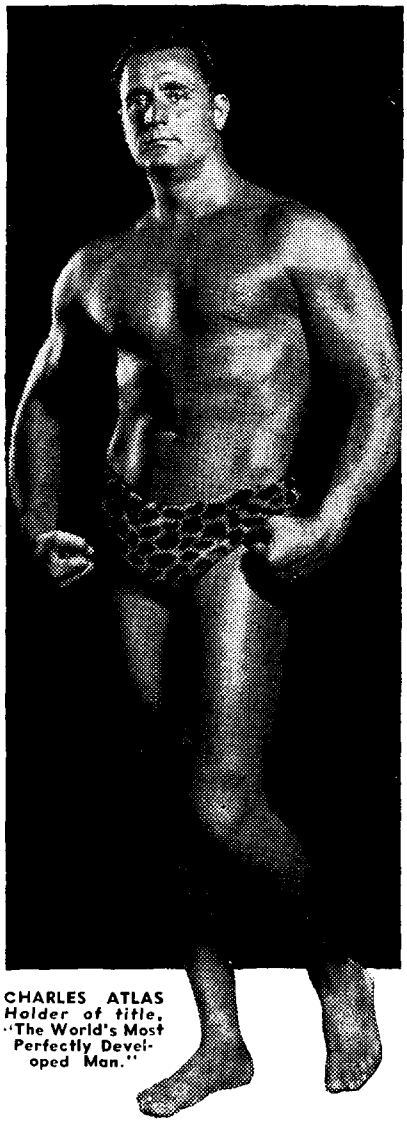

CHARLES ATLAS
Holder of title, "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man."

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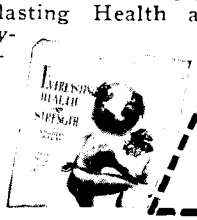

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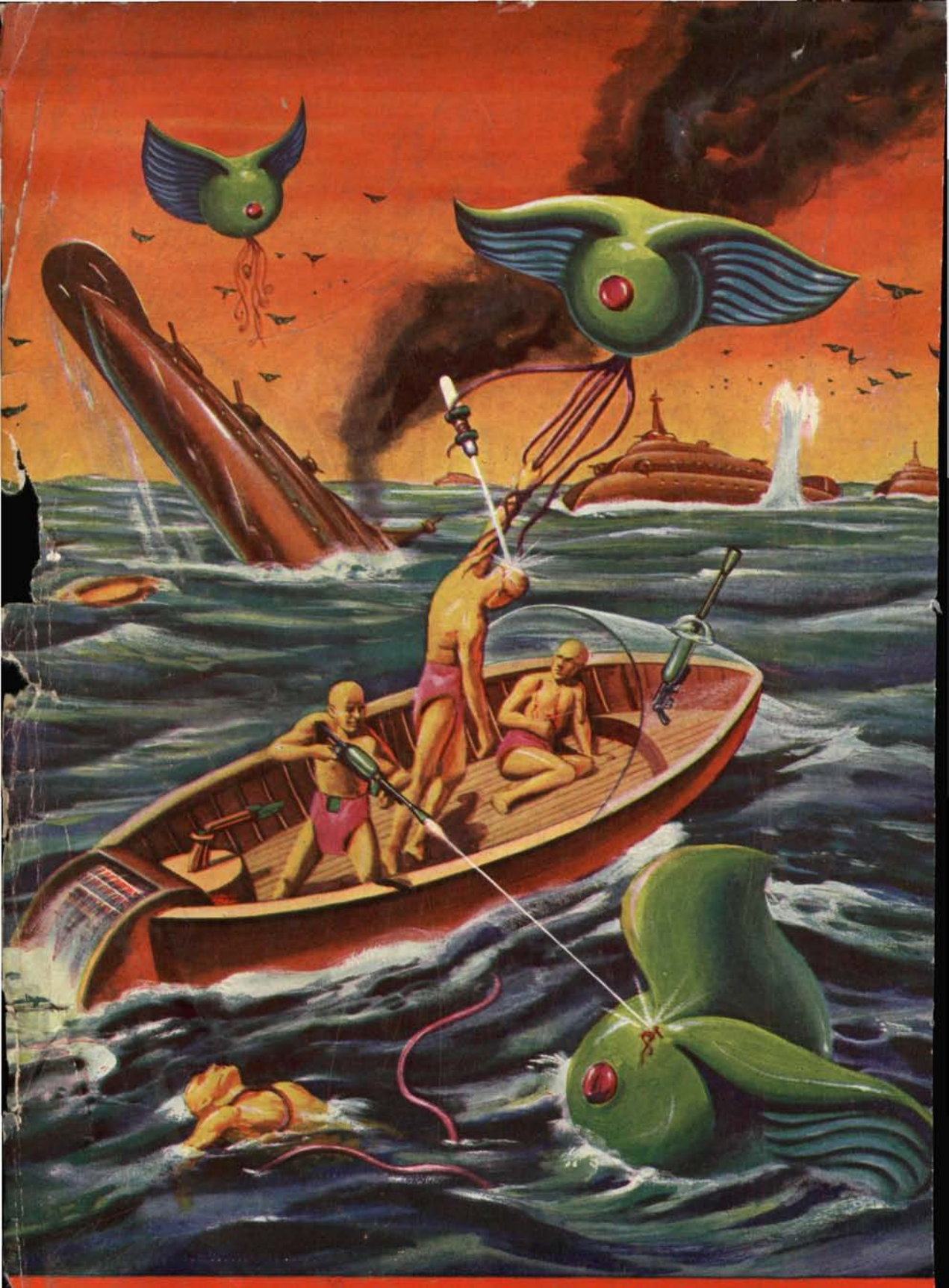

WARRIORS OF OTHER WORLDS

The warrior of Venus fights on water. There are no great land areas to support an army. His opponents are amoebic creatures in a vastly advanced state of evolution. (Story on page 208)

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